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OF THE EXPEDITION

VITOLD DE GOLISH  
PIERRE RAMBACH  
F. HÉBERT-STEVENSON

*School of Archaeology.*

# PRIMITIVE INDIA

EXPEDITION "TORTOISE" 1950-1952  
AFRICA—MIDDLE EAST—INDIA

*Translated from the French of*  
**VITOLD DE GOLISH**

*by* NADINE PEPPARD

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## *Contents*

Introduction	<i>page 7</i>
THE BONDOS	<i>page 31</i>
THE GADABAS	<i>page 35</i>
THE KANIS	<i>page 39</i>
THE TODAS	<i>page 43</i>
Notes to the Plates	<i>page 47</i>
Map of India	<i>page 6</i>

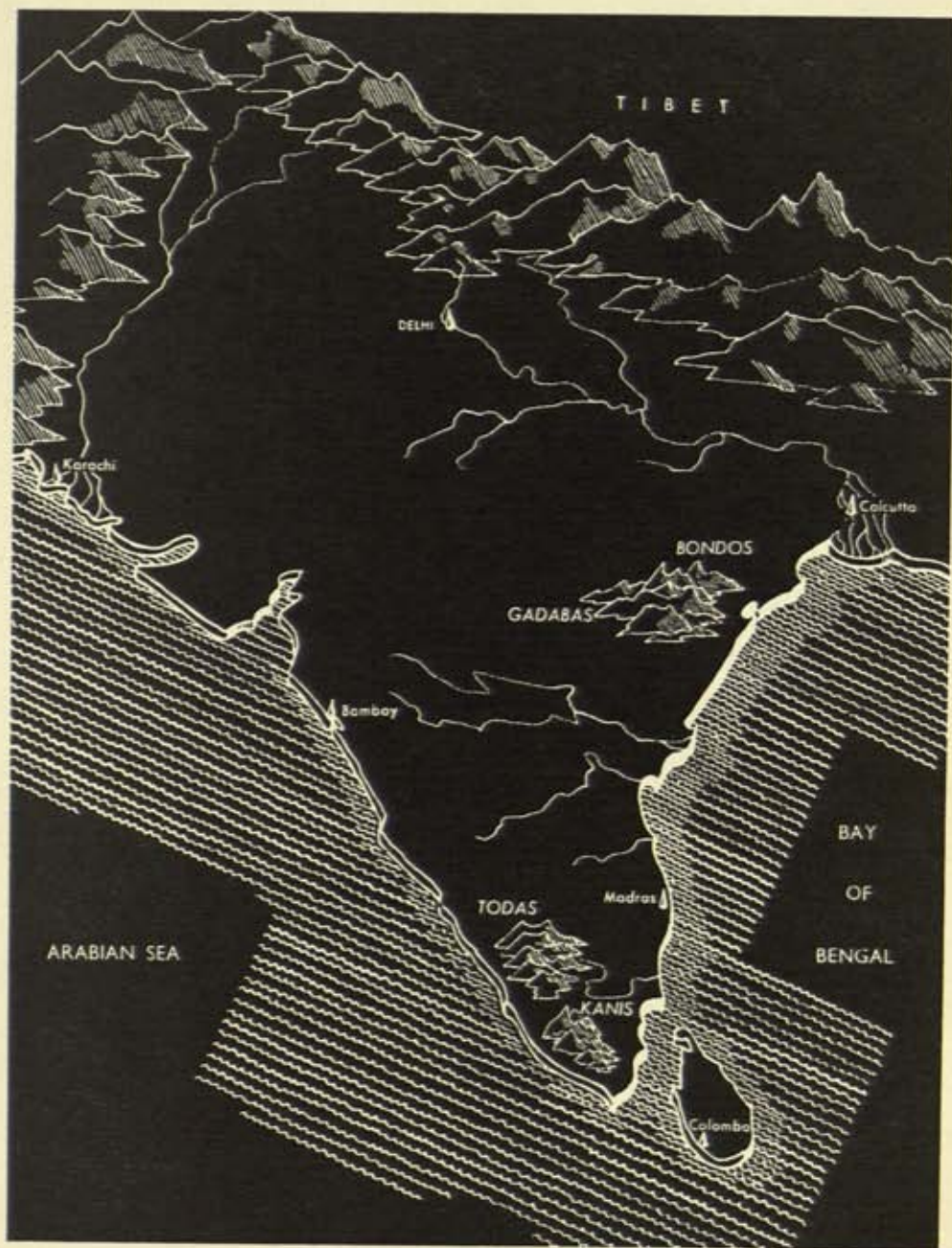




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We should like to make a special acknowledgment here to our friend Werner Jacobsen, of the Ethnographical Museum of Copenhagen, who shared with us his love for India and his profound knowledge of primitive tribes.





INDIA, land of marvels, of fabulous treasures, of mystics and of fakirs. . . . As we prepared ourselves for the shock of reality, soon to take the place of the mirage in our minds, our thoughts turned to the pilgrimages to the sacred banks of the Ganges, to the navigators setting out in search of spices, and to the slow-moving caravans on the silk route. Time and time again throughout the length of this journey of ours we had been able to trace the course of history—but only in short stages and from place to place, among the scanty pools of the Arab deluge, which have slowly been drained nearly dry. Now, at the end of it, we were about to meet the great living flood of Asia. There it was, a vast Middle Ages spanning the continent, its domain as wide and far in space as the centuries separating us from it in time.

One strange thing struck us: when we saw the buildings recently erected by modern India, we had a sudden impression that these, paradoxically, were the ruins. Such was the power of the past, still living and breathing, that it seemed to us to have reversed the perspective of history to its own advantage. It already held us in thrall, cutting us off from our uncertain present; it ceased to be an anachronism: we were living in another age.

India was a land of contrasts; we knew that. But what we discovered was the vitality which engendered those contrasts, the fact that everything was equally alive, that the ruins had as much future as the new things, that all epochs lived, or rather lived on, side by side, steeped in a strange timelessness that was part of the eternity of the world.

Gradually, however, we became accustomed to these perpetual incongruities. We came to see it as inevitable that there should be this juxtaposition, at first so surprising, of totally dissimilar races, tongues and customs, of bamboo and reinforced concrete, of bullock carts and American cars, of cows wandering about the streets of



the towns by the light of neon lamps. And then, recognizing our ignorance, we had recourse to books. From them we learned, or rather re-learned, that in the Ice Age, when the plateau of the Deccan belonged to Austronesia more than to Asia, the South of India was peopled by smallish dark-skinned men of the Australoid group, the remains of which are now found in Ceylon and Oceania. We read that other elements from the North and West came and mingled with these first inhabitants, and gave rise to a new group of races, which in their turn were gradually driven from the fertile valleys by a highly civilized people, the Dravidians. Then (in about 1500 B.C.) came the invasion of the Aryan nomads, whose language, beliefs and social organization were to play such an important part in moulding the rich Hindu character. Later came the onslaught of the Mongol hordes led by Genghis Khan and Tamburlaine, who swept down the steppes in waves from the north and pressed on together right to the gates of Travancore.

Add to this already varied ethnical and cultural pattern the Greek contribution made by the successors of Alexander, the Chinese and Jewish colonies settled in the South, the Nestorian and Mazdean communities from Persia, and the European colonizers of the seventeenth century, and the result was not only an idea of, but an explanation of, the extraordinary complexity of the population of India, and hence of her civilization.

But we, five architects from the *École des Beaux-Arts*, did not set out for India to make ethnographical researches. We had, of course, taken it as our guiding principle not to restrict ourselves to a clearly defined plan of work determined in advance, but to allow ourselves to take advantage of whatever opportunities presented themselves on the way. Nevertheless, our real aim was to bring back documentation on the origins and evolution of different forms of religious architecture. And in this field alone the potentialities were vast enough. We had studied the remains of temples in Upper Egypt and Mesopotamia, in Persia and Afghanistan. Now India, with the multiplicity of her styles, of her schools and of her religions, was to open up for us a field of observation of incomparable richness.



We spent long months examining the great Hindu sanctuaries of the Middle Ages. Then, tracing the course of the centuries from monument to monument, in order to reconstruct the evolution of forms, and where possible the overlapping of influences, we followed the trail back to the first stone temples. But there the guiding thread snapped. These temples of the sixth century—hardly known, much to our surprise—are actually a copy, or to be precise, a transposition, of more ancient temples of wood, which moss and termites have reduced to nothingness.

We had reached that point in our researches when, for the second time, India revealed herself to us. The striking contrast we had observed between Asia and the West, this return to the Middle Ages, was only half the story. There was the same expanse of time again, separating this India from yet another: the India of the primitive tribes.

Though they are known to ethnologists, these hill-tribes of the peninsula are still almost completely unknown to travellers and to the Indians themselves. Yet they constitute one of the most extraordinary anomalies in the world.

On this sub-continent where one mighty empire has succeeded another, where civilizations fruitful in the realms of both art and philosophy have reached a high degree of development, where from ancient times the currents of economic life have linked the Hindu markets with the four corners of the earth, how does it come about that these primitive tribes have been able to withstand the forces pressing upon them from all sides, and to resist the almost inevitable assimilation by peoples of a higher civilization? Above all, how does it come about that the great surge of Buddhist thought which was to rock Asia as far as Chinese Turkestan and Indonesia, and which crossed deserts and oceans, hardly touched these peoples living only a few hundred miles from its very centres of diffusion? Geographical conditions do not in themselves provide the answer, and the problem remains an enigma.

Not only have these tribes remained untouched by these powerful forces, but their own development has come to an end. Their arts and techniques have ceased to progress, and the life force of each



of these races has run dry. Thrown back on themselves as they are, rigorously preserving their traditional characteristics, permitting themselves no innovations of any kind, and handing on in myth and legend the memory of their past greatness, they present a faithful picture of a society in the first ages of humanity.

So it is that what is most ancient in India is not the temples, nor the monuments, nor even the fragments of pottery or flint lying hidden beneath the dust of dead civilizations, but it is living men.

Were we then concerned only with ethnology? We were beginning to think so. Yet we hesitated. Had we not still another enigma to solve—the origin of the temples of stone? But everything fits in. At that very moment we heard from our friend Werner Jacobsen, a learned ethnologist, that one of the tribes which, he thought, had settled in India before the arrival of the Dravidians was still building temples and houses of wood.

We decided to go and see for ourselves.



At the beginning of January 1951 we left the district of Bijapur and proceeded to Mysore, some three hundred miles to the south. The heat was torrid. From there could be seen already the heights of Nilgiri, towering over the vast mane of the jungle. The road wound its way up through trees and thickets. We had arranged to leave our car at Gudalur, the last Hindu village, where we should be able to recruit several boys and get supplies of rice and tobacco from time to time. For we were not placing much reliance on the Todas, as we had no idea what sort of reception they had in store for us. For the same reason we decided to take our tent with us, and we loaded it on the heads of the porters, together with our equipment (sound recorders, ten-metre measuring tapes, cine camera, Rolleiflex). We ourselves went ahead of them, as it should be, with nothing to carry.

After a day's march along the road leading to the plateau, we encountered some elephants in the charge of their Kurumba keepers. These were small, keen-eyed, dark-skinned men, who stared at us



suspiciously. They are the only ones who can control these huge animals by voice alone, without resorting to the hook which the mahouts find indispensable. On each side of the narrow ribbon of track rose the impenetrable wall of the jungle. Myriads of stalks, boles and branches of all shapes and formations—umbrellas, clumps pointing skywards like the heads of giraffes, long arms trailing down from the banana-trees—sprouted forth and intertwined themselves in a sort of silent onrush. A leopard fled at our approach. From the depth of the forest from time to time would come the reverberating call of a male elephant and the crash of trampled trees.

Then, gradually, as we reached the higher ground, the jungle began to thin out; soon grass appeared. We were nearing the upper edge. Clear, fresh air had taken the place of the suffocating heat of the plain and of the lower slopes, and it was almost cool when we at last emerged on to the vast undulating plateau, where spurs of rock jutted out here and there, among them the famous Makurti peak, the domain of the Toda god, Ön.

Ootacamund, the first village, was deserted. A few yards from the huts, the British had built bungalows where, in the hot season, the residents could come and rest in this exceptionally good climate—one of the most healthy in India, like that of Kashmir. We were to find later that there are several of these abandoned villages. It is not a case of expulsion from them, but of withdrawal and contraction. The tribe is dying out. The Todas, who in 1900 still numbered two thousand, are to-day down to five hundred. Like certain species of animals condemned to extinction by evolution, primitive peoples cannot sustain their isolated existence for long in the heart of a superior society.

The sixty or seventy villages which remain are scattered on the grassy ridges at intervals allowing for adequate pasture land for each of them. So it was just over half a mile from Ootacamund that we made contact with the Todas.

The first thing we did, when we had installed ourselves some way from their enclosures, was to examine their huts. Unlike the Bondos, whom we were later to have the greatest difficulty in approaching,



the Todas showed themselves to be peaceable. As we made our way through the jungle, we had wondered how these buffalo herdsmen were able to protect their animals from wild beasts, but actually, it is only very rarely that such beasts leave their jungle lairs and venture up to these high grasslands. Having no enemies, the Todas have no weapons. But their strength and their stature are impressive.

As we approached one of the small, low circular walls surrounding their dwellings, we came upon three men seated together. They hardly looked at us. They wore voluminous robes of white cotton decorated with vertical black and red stripes, and embroidered round the edge with delicate blue arabesques. Draped in these, and with their long hair falling on their shoulders, and their faces adorned with patriarchal beards, each one might almost have been some Themistocles or Alcibiades in exile.

For several days we wandered among them like this, disconcerted in spite of ourselves by their almost passive indifference, and yet struck each time by their haughty majesty of bearing.

The huts were just as Jacobsen had described them to us; in shape they are strangely reminiscent of the primitive temples carved in the solid rock more than two thousand years ago by the Buddhist monks of Bhaja and Ajanta. Their roofs of dry grass, sloping down to the ground, rest on a framework of bamboos bent into parabolic arches supporting the dome.<sup>1</sup> It may seem surprising to compare this parabolic structure with that of the great temples carved in stone; but it must be remembered that the houses of the gods were usually built in the same style as the houses of men, of which they were merely larger copies, and that the first builders bequeathed to their successors, even when those successors substituted stone for the too perishable wood, the forms of architecture demanded by tradition. In any case, these resemblances struck us, and even if the Toda huts are not the forerunners of the temples we saw at Bhaja, at least it seems to us that such a similarity between them holds the key which will one day unlock the mystery.

<sup>1</sup> See Plate 67.



Next we sought to get to know this ancient people better. These men, surviving from another age, excited us even more than the monuments we had discovered. It was true that they were not likely to teach us anything which might enrich our lives, or in any way help us to live them. But we had the vague feeling that there was in them something of a past greatness.

It is difficult to describe what we felt at that time. Different as the Todas seemed from ourselves, we could not feel that they were strangers. Paradoxical as it sounds, it is nevertheless true that we came closer to them in a few weeks than we came to the Hindus in the course of the long months we spent with them. "Humanity," said Auguste Comte, "is made up of the dead rather than of the living." Perhaps that was it? Perhaps, without knowing it, we had awakened the dead? At all events, we have never before experienced what we felt during our stay in the Toda country—such a sensation of living death.

Quite apart from the extinction to which disease seems to be condemning them (the Todas die young, and there are few children), their customs, ceremonies and legends nearly always have a close connection with death.

Their polyandry, for instance, seems to derive its origin from the necessity to limit births. The first English ethnologist, Mr Rivers, who visited the Todas in 1902, noticed that there were far fewer girls than boys. He deduced from this that infanticide, which was then fairly frequent among the Hindus, was a common practice with the Todas. When we asked our friend Tipane about this one day, he replied that they had never been a cruel people, and that it was not true that they used formerly to place new-born girl babies in the enclosures to be trampled to death by the buffaloes. "We merely smothered them," he said, "and anyway we no longer do that."

We noticed that this polyandry had an element of bargaining in it, and that it had a more amusing side. Sometimes a woman we had seen sitting before the little low door of her hut in the village where we had stopped would receive us in the next one, surrounded by new husbands, who had acquired her in exchange for their own



wife. Another time we heard that the husbands of Laxam, a most bewitching Toda, had lent her to their neighbours in exchange for a buffalo.

In the course of time we got to know them better, and their tongues were loosened. We began to find out where the buffalo herds grazed, and where we should find the temples—these strange 'pohs' as high as shikharas, and each surmounted by the holy amalaka—and the ancestral tombs under the standing stones which had intrigued us so much; we talked with the priests, who sat idle as they waited for the milk straight from the herds—the milk that only they were allowed to beat into butter. Sometimes Laxam herself, disdainful as ever, would smile as we examined along her arms and round her neck the tattoo-marks of which she was so proud, and which were like the pearls in a necklace. Some forgotten necklace, perhaps? A relic of the ancient glory of another age?

We had asked Tipane to take us to the chief, and to the ancients who govern the tribe and know the history of its ancestors. Like old men, these primitive peoples remember only their childhood. They know very little of the generations immediately preceding their own. But tradition, handed down through the centuries, has transmitted to them intact the legends which, in their presentation of the relationship between men and gods, reflect the beginnings of human society. Those of the Todas have retained no reference to their migrations, but all claim as the tribe's place of origin one of the hamlets of the Nilgiri hills. It would seem also that the Todas have always been herdsmen. This twofold character, static and pastoral, is epitomized in the person of their god Öñ, god of the mountains and of the buffaloes.

*One day Öñ went with his wife Pinârkûrs to Médrpem. There he put up an iron bar which stretched from one end of the pem to the other. Öñ stood at one end of the bar and brought forth buffaloes from the earth, sixteen hundred in number. Then Pinârkûrs tried to produce buffaloes and she stood at the other end of the bar and produced eighteen hundred buffaloes.*



*Behind Öñ's buffaloes there came out of the earth a man, holding the tail of the last buffalo, and this was the first Toda.*

According to other legends, the god first entrusted to the tigers the task of watching the herds, but, perceiving that they were cruel and were gradually killing off the buffaloes, he replaced them by the Todas. This variation merely emphasizes the idea that is at the root of all their beliefs—that man is a secondary creature. Not only was he created after the animals, as is told in the Bible, too, but he is by no means their master: he is their servant.

Indeed, from the very beginning of our stay there, we had been struck by the reverence they displayed towards their buffaloes. We had at first thought it no more than the herdsman's affection for his animals. The truth of the matter seems to be, however, that some mysterious force, perhaps a natural attunement, has welded their feelings and beliefs into one. Anyone having no knowledge of their religion would attribute their customs to their calling. We did so. But once more, this was because we were architects, not sociologists or ethnographers.

No other fable, it seemed to us, could surpass theirs in expressing with humour and subtlety the very nature and psychological basis of pastoral life. . . .

. . . Öñ gave his herds to the Todas to guard. The Todas are not their masters. What are the Todas? Simply guardians. A mere nothing. Öñ knows the good pasture lands, and man takes the buffaloes there. A mere nothing. Öñ taught man to churn the milk of the buffaloes and make butter of it. That is a great thing because man eats butter; also, the butter is a very sacred thing before it is eaten. And the priest to whom the young herdsman has brought his milk must withdraw backwards from the temple so as not to turn his back on the butter. When the Toda has driven his buffaloes to the pasture, and has milked the cow-buffalo and drunk her milk, there is little more for him to do. And then the Toda thinks of Öñ, who has entrusted his herds to him, and he thinks of the pasture lands where he is taking them to graze; and sometimes he thinks of



women, like Pinârkûrs, the wife of Öñ, whom the god embraces within his dwelling-place. What are his conclusions? That man is a mere nothing. The only thing which truly lives is that which gives life.

From our first days there, we had had this strange impression of a tribe of servants moving about among the herds. The real beings, the real living creatures, were the buffaloes. The men did not live; they ministered to life. Even among the buffaloes there were greater and lesser degrees of life, and therefore of sacredness. Those guarded by the Todas no longer had souls as pure as the souls of the wild buffaloes of the god Öñ—the buffaloes left to wander freely at the foot of Makurti, to be sacrificed by the Todas to their dead.

When Laxam died, the old chief came to see us, accompanied by Tipane, who used to translate the Toda legends into pidgin French for us. But this was no legend. Laxam was dead.

The opportunity of attending this extraordinary funeral ceremony seldom occurs. From early morning the relatives began to assemble in front of the hut of the young woman who had died. Then, while the men constructed a litter of branches and thongs of bamboo, the body was brought out through the tiny door. A little way away, the Kota musicians, members of the vassal tribe living at the foot of the Nilgiri hills, sat in a group with their long, curved trumpets, their pipes and their flat tambourines. Then, from the four points of the compass, came the Todas. They came in groups of three or four, arms linked, striding along, chanting the guttural "Rhao, hao, hao" with which they accompany this march to where the dead lies. Behind them the women, one by one, sought each other out and then formed themselves into a line. When they arrived at the village, they prostrated themselves before the men, seized their feet and lifted first one and then the other to their brows. The men began to regroup themselves; the small clusters were thinning out now into a huge circle, which continually widened as new arrivals joined it, and which rotated slowly and tirelessly to the ever-repeated chant of "Rhao, hao, hao." Under the skirts of their long peplums we could



see their legs moving; twenty, thirty, fifty, a hundred, two hundred legs shuffling, in a single movement, now to the left, now to the right, making an ever-rotating wheel of this circle of white putkúlis striped with red, black and delicate shades of blue. When all the Todas had joined the circle, the dance ceased.

Some way away, the women had prepared a frugal meal of honey, roots and curd, and this the men ate. Then the dead woman's family and friends bound the body on to the litter of carefully peeled wood, set it on the shoulders of four bearers chosen from the nearest relatives—brothers and husbands—and gave the signal for departure.

The cortege, consisting of the entire tribe, stretched in a never-ending line across the grasslands, winding, skirting the ridges, and climbing the slopes till it came to the remote spot where the Todas cremate their dead. It was a mound close by a wood. The men sat in line on the top of it, while the women crouched round the body and continued their lamentations.

Suddenly a buffalo appeared, panting and staggering between four hefty young men, who held it by the horns and the sides. Since dawn the strongest men of the tribe, recruited from the winners of a curious competition in which the competitors must lift huge stones, had been out in the forest in search of the sacred animals.

Eight of the beasts were to be brought here, after long and dangerous pursuit, so that they might be sacrificed. When the first appeared, one of the Todas rose. He went up to the buffalo and draped round its long curved horns a silver necklet with a bell hanging from it. The sound of the Kotas' trumpets rang out. Then, seizing his axe, the priest struck the animal on the head with all his might. After one blow the beast collapsed, but still struggled; a second fell, and the great black body lay still, its muzzle stretched out on the grass where it would never again graze, and its eyes still open, with a flicker of life in them. Then it was the turn of the next, then of six more. When all eight buffaloes had been slaughtered, the Todas prostrated themselves. Each of them, weeping, laid his brow on the horns of the animals, then on the brow of the dead woman. The bereaved mother stroked with one hand the muzzle of the nearest

buffalo, and with the other the head of her daughter. How many sins had she committed in life?

Here is the list of the thirteen hundred sins:

*All that man does in this world,  
All the sins committed by his ancestors,  
All the sins committed by his forebears,  
All the sins committed by his relatives,  
All the sins committed by himself;  
Treating his brother like a stranger,  
Moving the boundary of a field,  
Secretly cutting down the Kali tree,  
Cutting off green branches,  
Telling lies,  
Pulling up plants and leaving them in the sun,  
Giving little birds to the cats,  
Molesting the poor and the sick,  
Failing to feed the hungry,  
Failing to warm the cold,  
Giving bad directions to a traveller  
and causing him to lose his way in the forest,  
Sleeping on a bed and letting one's father-in-law sleep on the ground,  
Sitting on the veranda and driving one's mother-in-law from it,  
Showing ingratitude towards the priests. . . .*

Thirteen hundred sins in all. Not one more, not one less. But who knows which has not been committed?

The souls of the buffaloes are pure, with no sins to burden them. Let their souls go with the dead woman's, and guide it without sin into the kingdom of the dead.

*May all sins be swept away,  
May all sins be forgiven,  
May the door of the heavens be opened,  
May the door of Hell be closed,*



*May beauty prevail everywhere,  
May the bridge of thread be stretched across,  
May the well of perdition be filled in,  
May the path of thorns become smooth,  
May she reach the pillar of gold,  
May she come to rest against the pillar of silver,  
May all be fulfilled as it has been ordained.*

As evening was falling, the priest had the body carried to a place apart, among the trees. Then, setting light to some twigs smeared with butter, he threw them under the bier where the dead woman lay. At that moment we witnessed a horrifying spectacle. All the dead woman's relatives fell upon her jewels—the necklaces with which they had so carefully adorned her. One of them even drew his knife, and, in fear of the flames, cut off the ear from which hung an earring. Apparently sins do not count when it is the dead who are wronged.

Then the priest moved the body back and forth over the flames three times, and it began to burn under its clothing.

Slowly the Todas formed again into their circle, and began to revolve round and round. Then everything came to an end. We went off again into the night.



We lived with the Todas for three months. We had only intended to stay long enough to examine their huts. Jacobsen, who had been studying primitive tribes for years, knew infinitely more about them than we could ever hope to learn. And indeed, when we met him on our return, he smiled a little at our new-found knowledge. But this exciting adventure had opened up new vistas for us, and we decided to spend our last few months in India, and to visit other tribes.

So it was that one day we left Bhubaneswar to make our way into the mountains of Orissa. Two tribes lived there, the Bondos and the



Gadabas, the first of which was notorious for the number of murders which took place in it.

The province of Orissa, like certain regions of the Far West in the U.S.A., is one of the most modern and at the same time one of the wildest provinces of India. A number of dams have recently been built there, notably in the Damodar Valley, the Indian 'Tennessee Valley.' The Maharajah of Jeypore may have lost his power, but he has at least retained great prestige in the eyes of the primitive tribes who, ignorant of the changes which have taken place since 1947, still regard themselves as his subjects. These tribes are numerous: Murias, Saoras, Juangs, Ghonds, etc. They all live on the jungle-covered uplands, overlooking the other jungle, intersected with swamps and rivers, which stretches as far as the eye can see towards the Western coast of the peninsula.

After passing through Vizagapatam, the site of a monastery of French Jesuits by the sea, we came to the first slopes where, on the edge of the wooded uplands, the Gadabas have burnt away the brush-wood and planted some small paddy-fields. This can only just be called cultivation. The rudimentary hoe that they use scrapes the earth rather than turns it over.

Leaving their villages for the time being, we continued in the direction of the high and often precipitous cliffs where the huts of their neighbours the Bondos were perched. Here and there could be seen bare ridges, covered with ashes and charred tree-trunks, which gave the landscape a most sinister appearance. It would have been exhausting to cut through the jungle and the swamps, so we decided to follow the course of the torrents. But it was only after several days' march that we heard, through the trees, the shouts and calls of the Bondo look-outs as they fled at our approach. We caught sight of them before long, but a little too late, when, furious at our intrusion, they greeted us with a shower of arrows. Two of our porters, who, a moment before, had been begging us in fear and trembling not to go any further, were wounded.

We managed to appease them, however, and they gradually



became accustomed to our presence. But we well remember certain nights when, in their chief's hut, we stayed on the alert—our terrified porters pressed against our legs—and listened, as from behind the flimsy bamboo partitions rose the din of their feasting, the uproar of large numbers of them maddened by palm wine.

Although they and the Gadabas belong to the same race, as their legends demonstrate, the two tribes reveal great differences in character, appearance and customs. The striking thing about the Bondos, at first sight, is their uneasy and wild expression. Their mentality is difficult to grasp, their reactions unexpected. But it seems that these traits only appear with age. The young ones are gay, the boys are even gentle and almost effeminate. They enjoy, moreover, an independence in the bosom of the tribe which goes on right up to marriage, and which has resulted in a social institution both original and characteristic.

As soon as they have attained marriageable age, the young girls leave their parents' house and go and live together in a hut reserved for them. We called it "the rendez-vous hut." Groups of young men gather in the villages each evening, and hold a discussion as to which huts they should choose for that night's expedition. Each one extols the charms of one of the girls of his acquaintance and declares himself for a certain village; then they set out, bearing gifts, and sometimes covering a considerable number of miles through the forest. Meanwhile, in honour of the visitors, the girls have prepared some delicacies, the dish most relished being fattened rat, roasted on a spit. In a lively, light-hearted atmosphere they sing, they jostle each other, they spar with each other, they throw ashes on each other's heads, and generally indulge in horseplay, which may be a little rough, but in which any sort of licence is strictly forbidden.

When, after two or three months of constant visiting, a girl seems to take pleasure in the company of a young Bondo, he proceeds to more definite declarations. For instance, he makes as if to burn his partner with a brand from the fire; if she gets up and goes to sit at the other end of the hut, his advances are unwelcome. But if the



girl cuffs him or pays him back with a burn, their intimacy is sealed. Then the boy makes the decisive test, by attempting to slip a bracelet on to the arm of his conquest. She struggles, with a greater or lesser degree of force, for if the bracelet is slipped on in front of everybody the action constitutes an engagement. Then the betrothed pair go off to some more private place to get to know one another better.

Next the fiancé's friends make a pretence of kidnapping the girl. They usually choose the last few minutes of a feast for this. The girl makes a show of resisting them; she cries out, she calls for help. But no one is concerned about her fate. She is carried off to her fiancé's village, where she shares a meal with him, thus indicating her willingness to live with him. Then and only then do the relatives come into it, and discuss the price among themselves; there are long speeches, repeated visits, and at last they come to an agreement. Then the young people go off in search of the engaged couple. But the two of them flee into the forest, then struggle with their pursuers, and are brought back by force. They are led into a hut, divested of their clothing, tied together with a rope, drenched in icy cold water and finally left to themselves.

But the gaiety and insouciance shown in these ceremonies only lasts for a time. The rigour of the climate, the poverty of the earth, the attacks of wild beasts, and above all the evil influence of spirits and the torments caused by ghosts, soon make the Bondo taciturn and uncommunicative. His only standby in a hostile world is palm wine, which he drinks to excess. As soon as he wakes up he makes his way to the palm trees and to the sweet sap which has filled the pots fixed to the gashed trunk the night before. And that evening, intoxicated and infuriated, he curses his wife, quarrels with his neighbours and provokes brawls which degenerate into killings.

The British ethnologist, Verrier Elwin, who has studied criminality among the primitive tribes of Orissa, considers the Bondos to be one of the most murderous tribes in the world. We had been aware of this fact for some time, and after the unfortunate experience we had on our arrival, we hesitated to prolong our stay. But when we were received by the chief, who was later to take us under his



protection, we learned that his warriors had merely wished to punish us for desecrating a holy place.

The Bondos, whose religion and superstitions are derived from humanity's most ancient beliefs, have a particular veneration for stones. Everywhere around their villages are to be found curious cairns to which they come in order to worship the presence of their deities. Sometimes they roll huge rocks into the middle of pathways, to forestall, so they declare, vibrations of the earth caused by spirits. These superstitions are manifested by the Bondos in hundreds of obsessions. With them, everything is made an occasion for fear, hesitation, suspicion. The mystery of the jungle surrounds them—this infinite mystery embodied in thousands of noises, thousands of shapes, of quiverings, of strange life, where everything moves and grows without respite: wild beasts in flight, foliage rustling in the wind, shifting patches of light giving everything the appearance of movement. And it is as though this sense of mystery pervades their minds and obsesses them.

They have only to see some irregularity in the surface of the ground, some tree rather impressive in shape, some overturned rock or some unusual silhouette, and they believe that an unknown force is hiding there. Their territory, with its fences and its holy places, is a world apart.

When we left, accompanied by Soma-Siza, the chief's son, he stopped suddenly at the top of the hill, from where we looked down for the last time on the large brown roofs of the huts. There, a few hundred yards from his village, ran an old boundary wall. All that remains of it is a few crumbled fragments along the paths. Nevertheless, for him it was the unknown. He could not conquer his native fear of all the unseen dangers foretold for him in the stones, the trees, the unknown features of this new world. In his own country the dangers, the secrets and the gods were at least familiar to him. And we watched him make his way back to the hidden clearing where he and his kind would live out their solitude to the end.





At the foot of the high cliffs we came to the marshes. A wearying part of the trek, with our feet sinking into the mud and becoming entangled in the roots of the weeds which twined round our legs and dragged off our shoes. It took us a whole day to cross them. And beyond them, on the hills separating these marshes from the Gadaba country, lay the jungle once more, with groups of trees thickening into an inextricable tangle. Then came further difficult patches, further exhausting stages of the journey, with no landmarks, where we camped for the night under our mosquito nets by the side of glowing fires. On the last day we decided to press on after sunset, in order to reach Godopal, the first Gadaba village some miles from the Koraput track.

We reached it at about eleven o'clock that night. Some way from it we came upon a group of men gathered on a high piece of ground and drinking straight from the pot the thick frothy rice drink they call 'sapun.' There was a feast in the village, and from the square came the sound of women's voices and the rhythmic music which accompanies their dancing. But there was no shouting, no rowdy laughter.

The gaiety of these tribes is very different from that we had—very rarely—seen in the Bondos. There is something in it very similar to the carefree joie de vivre of the Tahitians. Where the Bondos are suspicious and irritable, the Gadabas are friendly and full of laughter. The village lives in a peaceful atmosphere, this peace scarcely disturbed by the feasts. And the men lay aside in a corner of their huts the bow and arrow from which the Bondo will never be separated.

The disparity to be found in their legends, too, shows this same contrast between hard life and grinding poverty on the one hand, and the first softening influences, the first refinements of civilization on the other.

For instance, a Bondo legend recounts how one day some women surprised a certain goddess in the act of bathing. They, naked, were astonished to see that she entered the water without removing her clothes, and they began to chaff her. Offended, she threw them a



piece of cloth, and told them to clothe themselves in it. But as there were so many of them, they cut it up and shared out the pieces. This was the origin of their loin-cloths.

In the Gadaba legend, the goddess becomes Sita, and her clothing a sari, obvious borrowings from Hinduism. And although the Gadaba women also chaff the goddess, it is not because she is clothed, but because the silk is clinging to her body. This is a witty invention, and one of some subtlety and finesse, providing a reply to the Hindu pretensions to superiority, and at the same time extolling the advantages of the coarse Gadaba cloth.

We came into the square, which was lit by the flames from a brazier, and found a fairyland scene. Some ten young women, their arms linked behind their backs, were standing closely pressed together, shoulder to shoulder, in a sort of living garland. Their coloured tunics, similar to the tiger-skin ones probably worn by their ancestors, made a long line of horizontal stripes of red, white and blue, which looked for all the world like shimmering reflections or softly glowing clusters of colour cast into the darkness by the fire. Slowly they began to move, still linked together, their hips pressed close, until gradually their timid movement accelerated, then grew violent. One moment they seemed to be hesitating, and, as if frightened, they beat a hasty retreat; then they began again and leapt into new movement. Ten times, twenty times, to the same indefinite, repetitive rhythm, they began again, gradually revolving round the brazier, which flickered now on their shining, rather set faces, now on their arms loaded with silver bracelets. And the whole time the skilful and sensitive leader of the dance created and re-created the new cycles of movement. So the world goes round, and the days, and the passions of men.



"Now you must be content to skip ten or eleven whole years, and only guess at all the wonderful life that Mowgli led among the wolves, because if it were written out it would fill ever so many books." Although, obviously, we did not travel as extensively in



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"Now you must be content to skip ten or eleven whole years, and only guess at all the wonderful life that Mowgli led among the wolves, because if it were written out it would fill ever so many books." Although, obviously, we did not travel as extensively in



India as did Kipling, we could tell many other stories of the tribes we saw after we left Godopal and the Gadaba dancers.

We found Mowgli in the jungle, twenty miles from the Malabar coast, in the Ashambo-Mohendragiri mountains. We had just passed through Travancore, and Padmanabapuram, the deserted capital, where all that remains is an empty palace with curious roofs similar to those of a Chinese pagoda. We were again among the tree-clad mountains. But this time we were really beginning to wonder whether we should ever encounter, among the rocks, the undergrowth, and the mass of leaves and branches smoking in the sun, any living creatures other than the wild beasts from the pages of *The Jungle Book*. And it was then that we had this amazing encounter with two small children, on their own and nearly naked, who watched our approach with a sort of terror. On top of a rock were several shelters built on piles and made of plaited branches and leaves of bamboo or of palm. This was the village. Other families lived at the top of trees, on a sort of platform protected from the inclemency of the weather—torrential rain falls in this region for six months at a time—by a roof of leaves.

This tribe of Kanis, one of the most primitive in India, is also the one bearing the strongest resemblance to the Australian aborigines, the men being about five feet in height, with dark skins and curly hair. They live on what they can gather and what they can kill; they use a bow, but instead of arrows, which are unknown to them, they shoot with small pebbles. There are few men living lives as hard as theirs. Always starving, always on the alert, they are melancholy by temperament, and seem fully conscious of the tragedy of their situation.

Nevertheless, they received us kindly, and with pride. In these vast forest lands, their wretched encampments are like a haven of civilization. Only here can the explorer dry himself by a huge fire, appease his hunger by nibbling at boiled manioc roots, feel free from fear of the tiger (warded off by the tom-tom) and sleep in relative security.

Then, too, we were able to listen to their long stories, like the



one about King Mutu the peace-lover, who was killed by his soldiers because he did not return to his kingdom by the road he had told them, and the ones about King Shri Ragam, and about King Virappam, who was driven into the mountains by a mighty invader.

It is the fashion in Travancore to consider the Kanis as a race of slaves. The Hindus are only too ready to recall that they were canopy-bearers for the maharajahs of Padmanabapuram. That may be. There is no doubt, however, that this tribe, now in decline, has in other times known a free and happy life, and even, if ancient narratives are to be believed, a glorious past. Moreover, the legends recounted to us made unmistakable references to historical events. But to what period did they refer? How and where could we find the clues, the similarities—even partial ones—of word or narrative, which help to date or confirm an event from the history of one people in that of another, and thus to establish a historical fact?

But that was only one of a thousand questions arising from this journey. Each tribe we visited gave rise to so many questions and such complex ones that it would have taken us years even to sort the tangle from which one day the guiding thread might be drawn. What, for instance, is the explanation of the presence in the midst of proto-Australoid tribes, of this colony of Todas, who are possibly Dravidian, possibly Sumerian, possibly even Mediterranean? What cycle is represented by their legends? Has their god Ōn any connection with the god Anou, already worshipped three thousand years before Christ in Sippar and Nippur? What tradition were they perpetuating when they built their houses of bamboo, unobtainable on the Nilgiri heights, and which they persist in importing at great cost to themselves? Where did they come from? Of what ancient people were they the remains? In the case of the Bondos and Gadabas, other completely different connections appeared, notably with the Oceanians (the Bondo love-huts). While staying with the Kanis, those contemporaries of the neolithic peoples, we came upon a trace, truly unique, of a dramatic art which bore witness to their having been part of a developed civilization, now lost to their memory after



centuries of decline. Everywhere in their territory we found prehistoric remains, tumuli, megaliths. These were valuable relics. The problems are important and exciting. They are urgent, too, in the light of the fact that certain of these 'signpost' tribes are doomed to extinction or to imminent contamination, which the intrusion of the West is, alas! merely hastening.

So we returned, knowing at last that India, which many claim to know, and all so justly admire, is a land of mystery rather than of revelation.

We had visited her, as do so many Europeans, to make in our own way a pilgrimage to the source. In other words, we wanted to realize an ambition, to solve our problems, to find satisfaction there, artistically and spiritually speaking. And a totally unexpected India had revealed to us other sources, mysterious and far-off ones. Not those sources which feed the rivers and reflect the sky seen overhead by only one portion of humanity, but the ultimate sources, from the heavens themselves. And the more we journeyed from one source to another, the more fully we understood the great truth, so often forgotten, that the mightiest triumphs of history are the culmination of innumerable attempts and contributions ceaselessly made, over and over again, through thousands of years.

Before the Vedas, and before the first temples of stone, another India, several other Indias, existed. And, what is even more surprising, in a measure they still exist. Though we did not find the solution of the origins of architecture, at least we think that the study thus begun should be completed. The primitive peoples of India still hold many secrets.

So that they might be better understood, less despised, these tribes—from the possibly Dravidian Todas to the Bondos and the Gadabas with their Munda language, and the Kanis probably connected with the Australian aborigines—people will perhaps learn something of what they have been since prehistoric times, these mysterious peoples who gave India her first civilizations.

Perhaps, too, when they have thrown some light on the past, people will understand more of the mysterious workings of time,



which have brought India out of a chaos unequalled in the history of the world, only to make her a country of complete contrasts.

That, in fact, is the miracle of India.

A study must be made of the primitive tribes, and a comparison of one with the other, as well as with the peoples of the valley, in order to appreciate the extent of the original disparity between the multiple elements of which India consists.

Then it is not the contrasts which appear amazing, but the fact that they can co-exist, that India has produced this genius for maintaining a diversity which does not destroy, but which is integrated into a living whole.





## THE BONDOS

*In the beginning there was only water. Then Mahaprabhu created the Earth, the first boy and the first girl. In those days there was neither house nor village, and they wandered from place to place in search of sustenance. When they grew to be man and woman they married. When the hour came for the woman to give birth she seated herself at the foot of a palm tree and brought forth twins into the world. At that moment a deer passed by.*

*The man and the woman gave chase and forgot their children.*

*The infants, under their tree, grew hungry, and began to cry. The palm tree saw their distress, and took pity on them. Its roots made their way to the Ocean to ask for help. The Ocean was flattered at this, and said to them: "Tell me what you want. What can I do for you?" The roots of the palm tree recounted the story of the starving babes. Then the Ocean took pity and gave water to the roots. This water coursed to the very top of the palm tree, and dropped down into the children's mouths. And they, drinking the liquid from the palm tree each day, grew and became man and woman. They married, and had twelve sons and twelve daughters. The twelve sons were the fathers of the twelve tribes: Bondos, Gadabas, Konds, Parengas, Didayis, Pengus, . . . as for the rest, they have gone from our memory. The eldest son was called Nangli Bondo. His tribe lived in happiness and prosperity. But one day Kidramati-Rani, the squirrel, said to his son: "On Monday it will thunder, on Tuesday it will rain, on Wednesday the whole earth will be covered by the waters. Eat all you can to-day, for there is going to be a long period of famine." Kotramati, the hind, heard the words of the squirrel. At that time she was with young. Now a Bondo, Mulya Bodnaik, was sitting on the bank of the river where the hind went down to drink. Seeing him, the hind paused, but the being within her said to her: "Go and drink. If you are killed it will be all to the good, for in two days you will be drowned." Mulya Bodnaik heard the voice, and promised the hind that he would not kill her if she would tell him who it was she carried within her. Then from her belly came a deep voice which said: "I am Mahaprabhu, and I am come to warn you. Take your children and place them in a*



gourd, with some food. Take also one grain of each species : mango, tamarisk, mahua, palm, dūmal, pipal and banyan." Mūlya Bodhaīk returned to his village and said : "In two days' time the world will disappear beneath the waters. Let him who has two wives give one to him who is without, and let us make merry while we may." He put the children into a gourd, then the rain fell, and the world disappeared beneath the waters.

Mahāprabhu wondered whether some man had been saved. With the sweat of his body he made a crow which might go and see ; but the crow said to him : "Where shall I be able to alight and rest?" Then Mahāprabhu took a bombax tree and threw it into the water for a perch. When the crow returned, it declared that it had seen two children in a gourd. Mahāprabhu opened the belly of a crab and found no earth inside. He called Bhui and said to him : "Go down to the earth below and drink up all the water." And Bhui went down, and sucked up the water through his nose until the earth appeared once more. But the earth refused to dry out, and everywhere there was nothing but mud. Then Mahāprabhu once again summoned up the sweat of his body and created Kommar the smith. He gave him implements : hammer, tongs and bellows, and sent him to Mount Samudra to dry out the Earth. Kommar built himself a workshop, heated the mountain till it glowed red, and began to beat it with his hammer. The Earth took fright at being thus beaten and heated over all her surface, so she quickly dried herself and became as before. Then Mahāprabhu brought the children forth from the gourd, and changed their appearance by giving them the smallpox. Not recognizing each other, they married and peopled the earth once more.

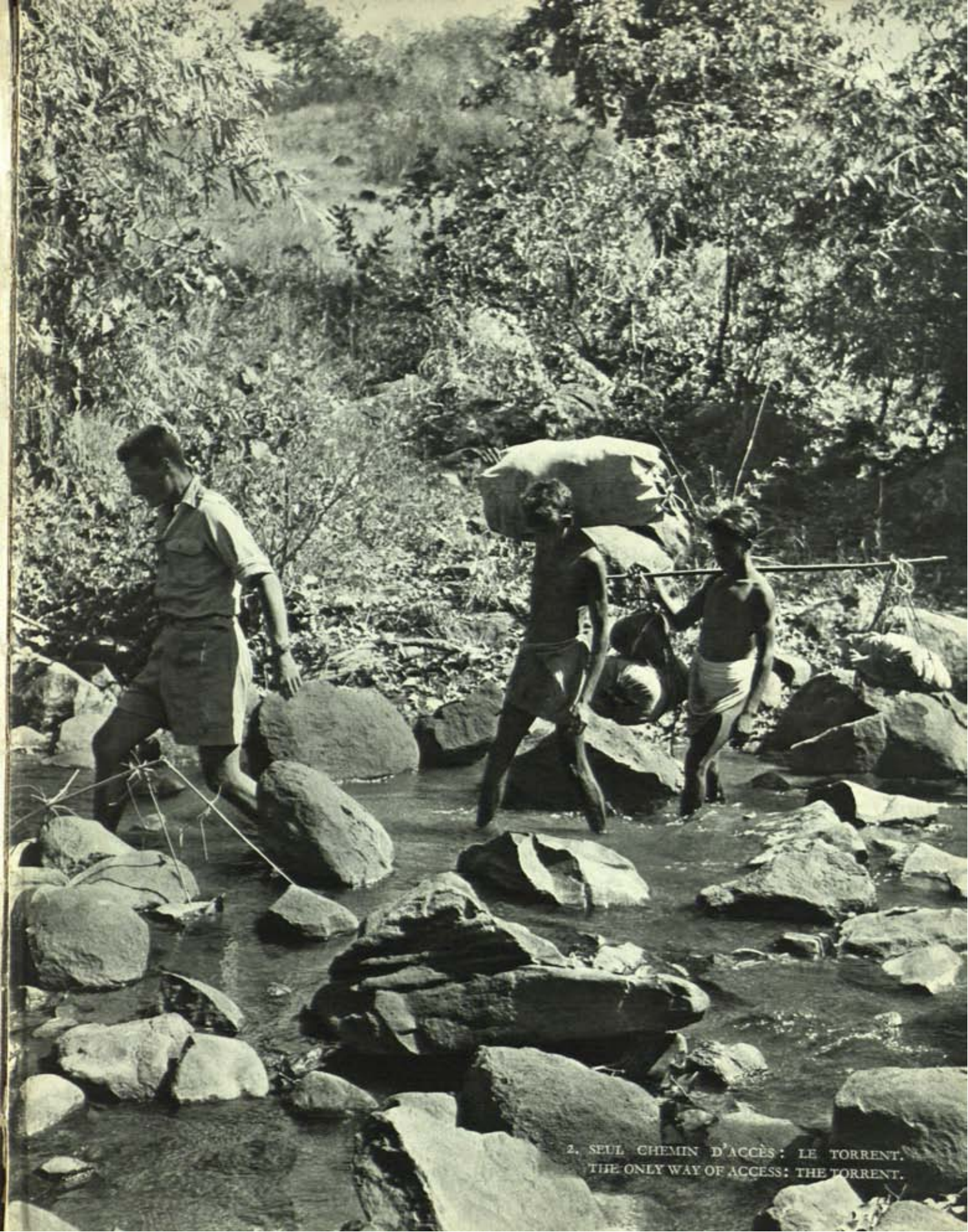












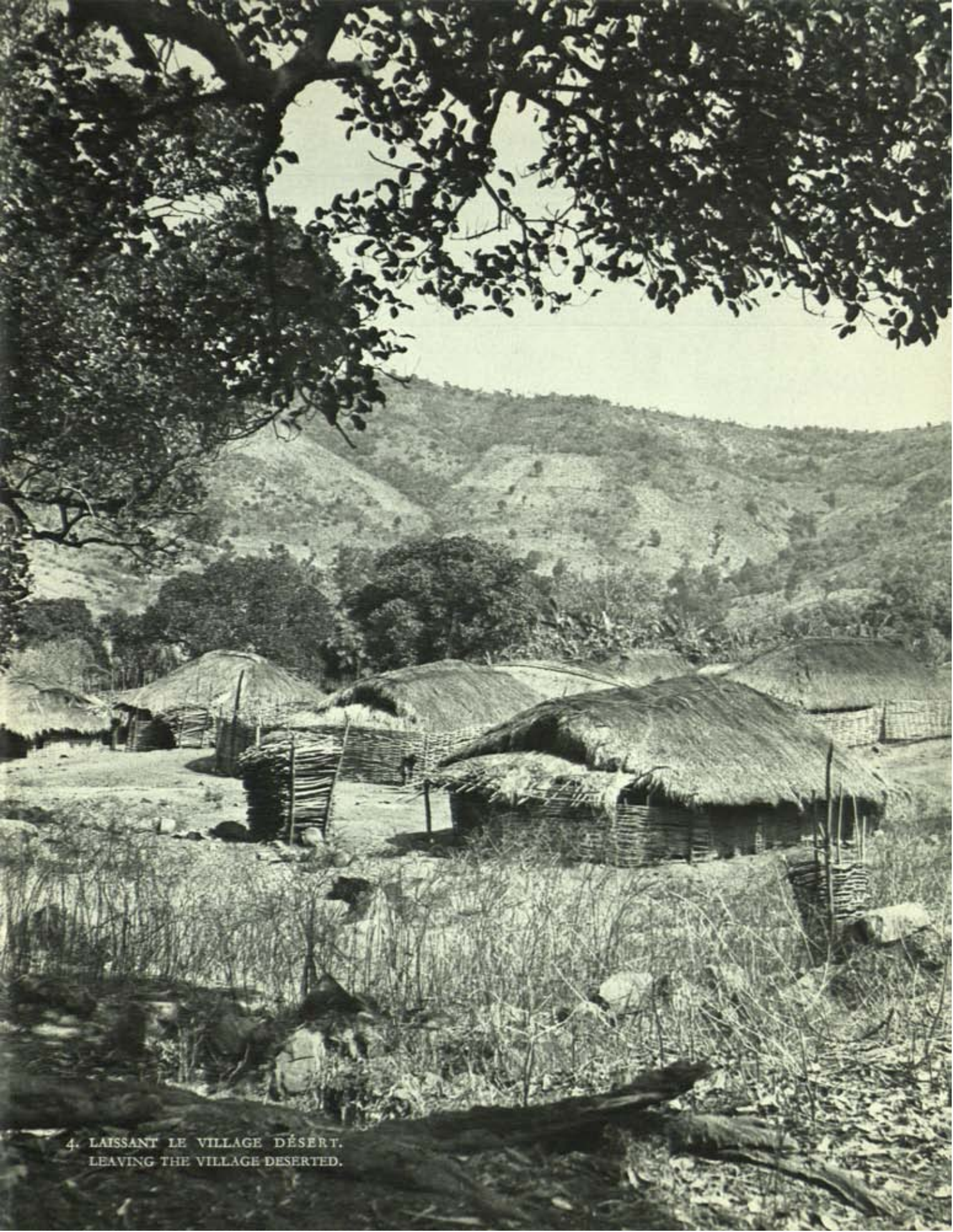
2. SEUL CHEMIN D'ACCÈS : LE TORRENT.  
THE ONLY WAY OF ACCESS : THE TORRENT.





3. À NOTRE APPROCHE, LES FEMMES AVAIENT FUI...  
AT OUR APPROACH, THE WOMEN FLED...





4. LAISSANT LE VILLAGE DÉSERT.  
LEAVING THE VILLAGE DESERTED.

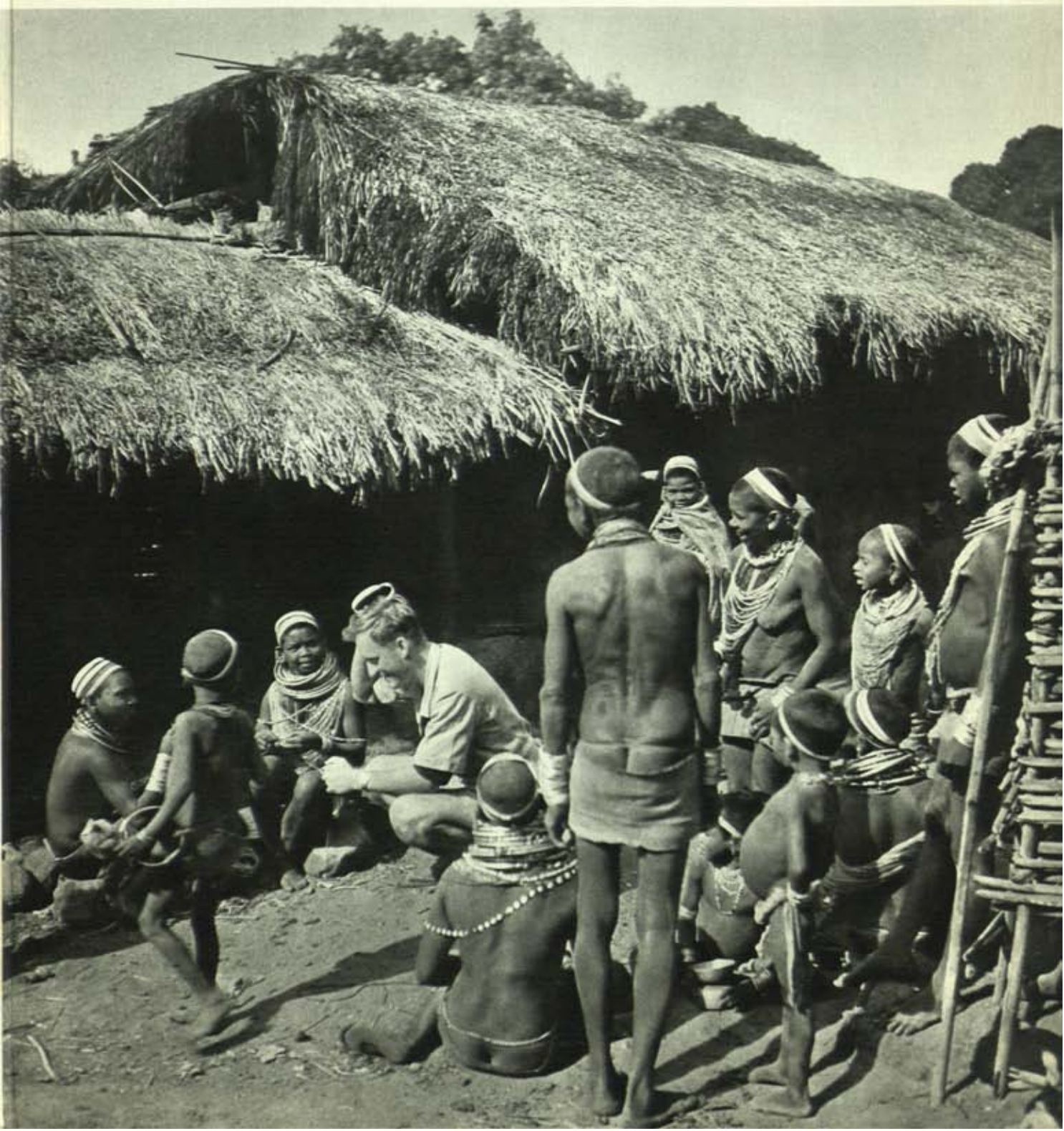




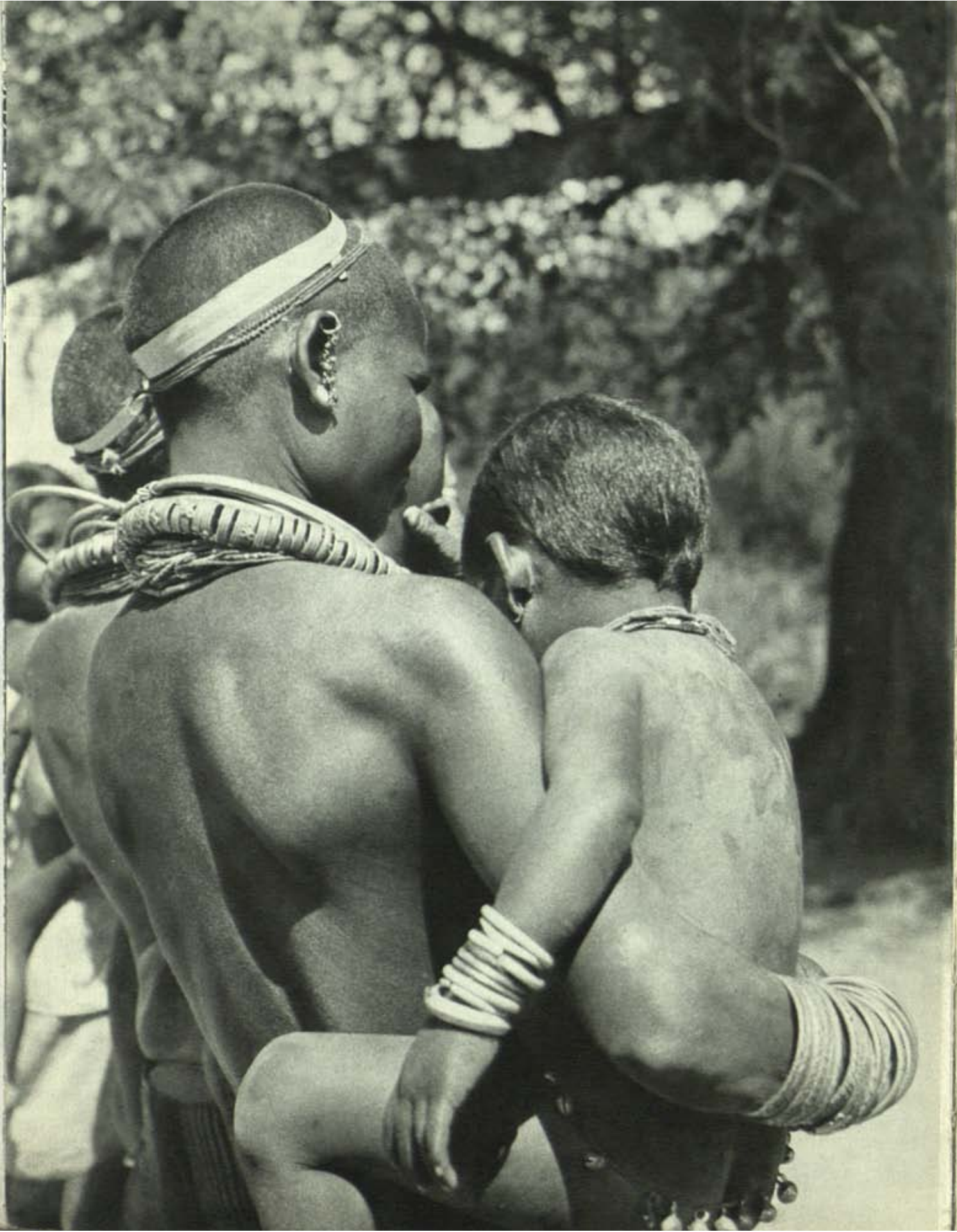


5. APRÈS UN ACCUEIL RÉSERVÉ...  
AFTER A CAUTIOUS WELCOME...

6. PREMIER SIGNE DE CONFIANCE : LA REMISE DU BANDEAU.  
THE FIRST SIGN OF CONFIDENCE : OFFERING THE HEAD-BAND.









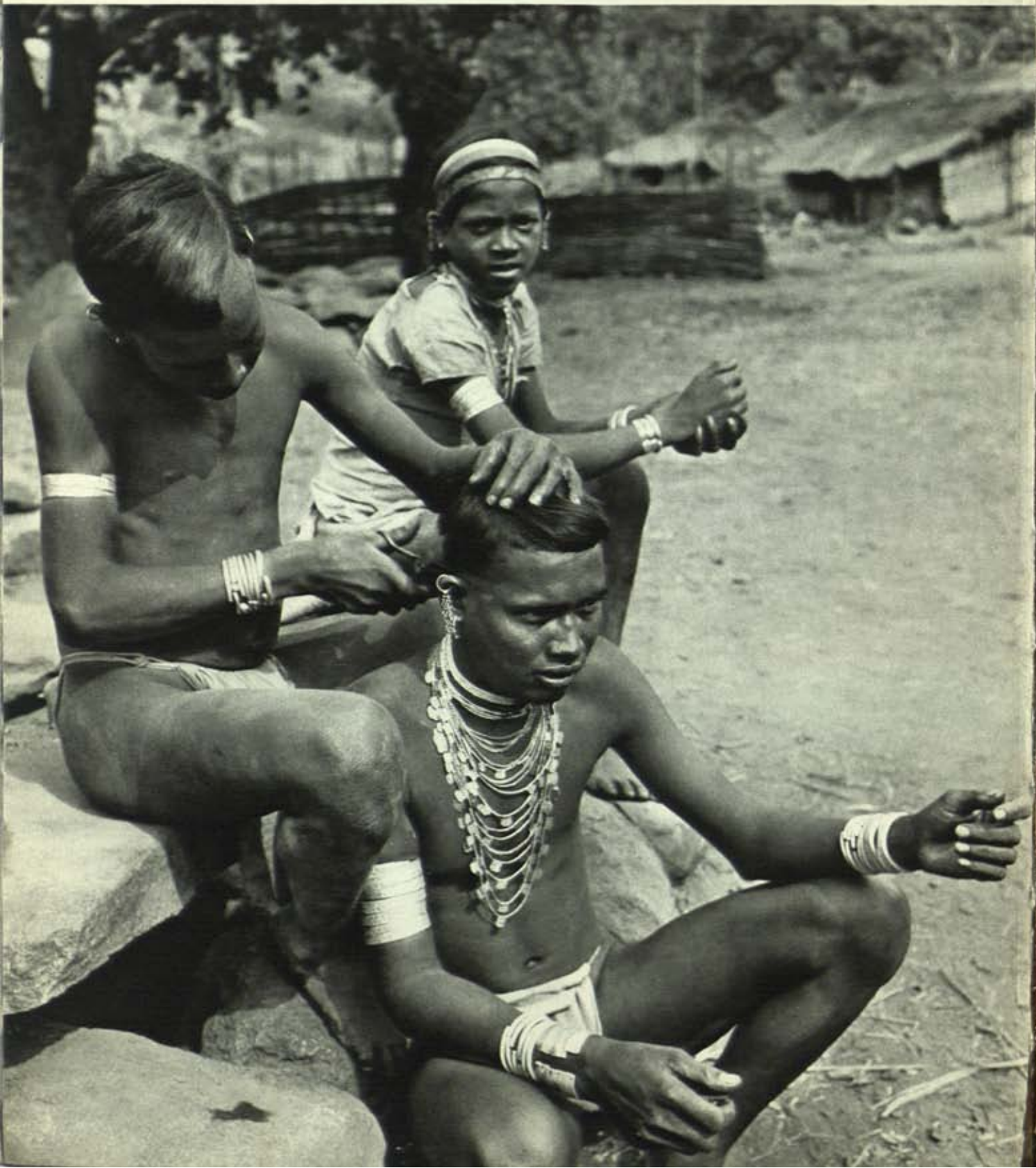
7. L'ENFANT BOUDEUR.  
THE SULKY CHILD.

8. NOUS SOMMES DÉJÀ DES HOMMES.  
WE ARE MEN ALREADY.



9. LES CISEAUX DES BLANCS SONT LENTS, COIFFEUR.  
THE WHITE MEN'S SCISSORS GO SLOWLY, BARBER !

10. J'ARRIVERAI EN RETARD À LA CASE DU RENDEZ-VOUS.  
I SHALL BE LATE AT THE RENDEZ-VOUS HUT.





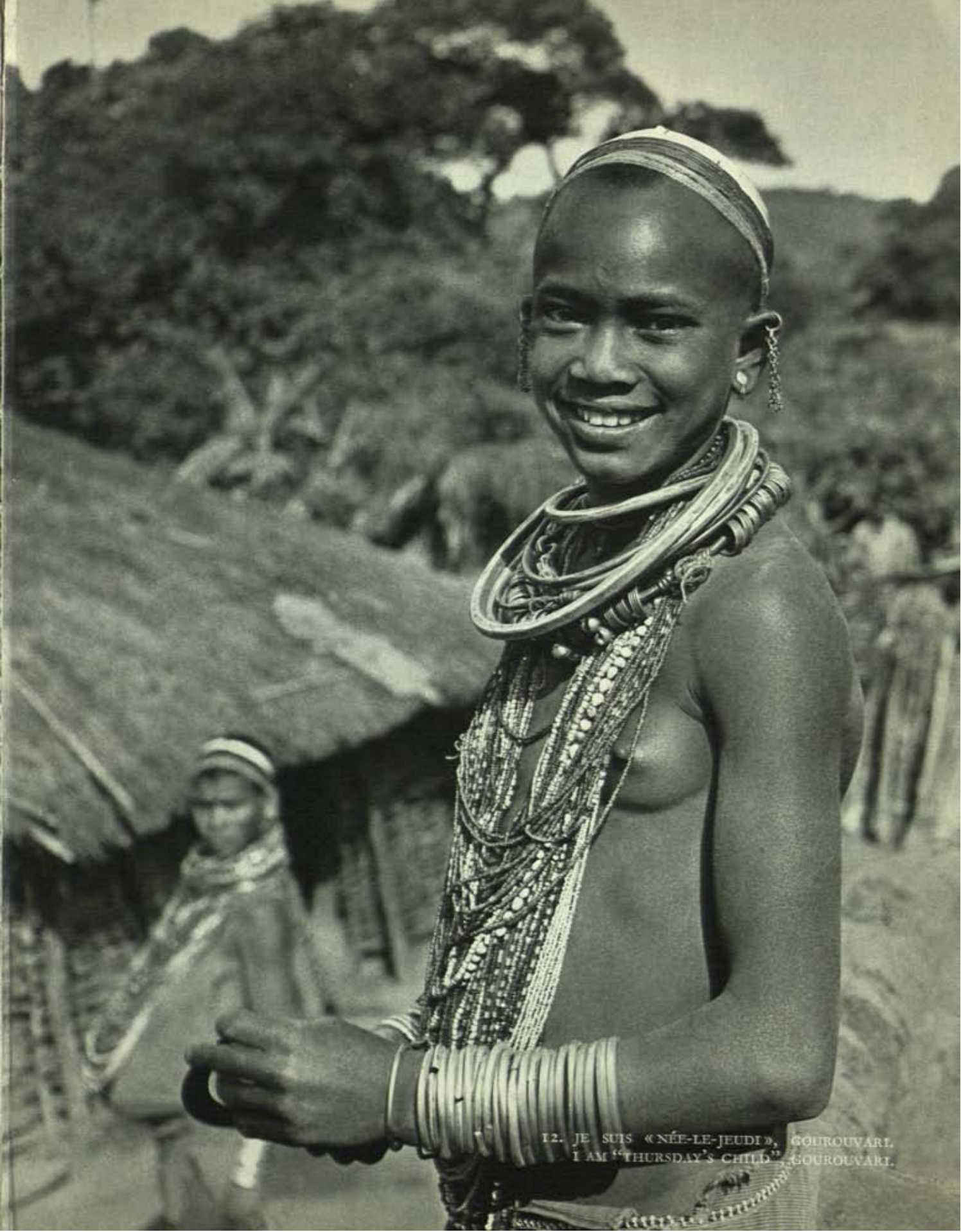






11. ADI ET MOGLI, AMIS DE TOUS LES JOURS.  
ADI AND MOGLI, BOSOM FRIENDS.





12. JE SUIS «NÉE-LE-JEUDI», GOUROUVARI.  
I AM "THURSDAY'S CHILD", GOUROUVARI.





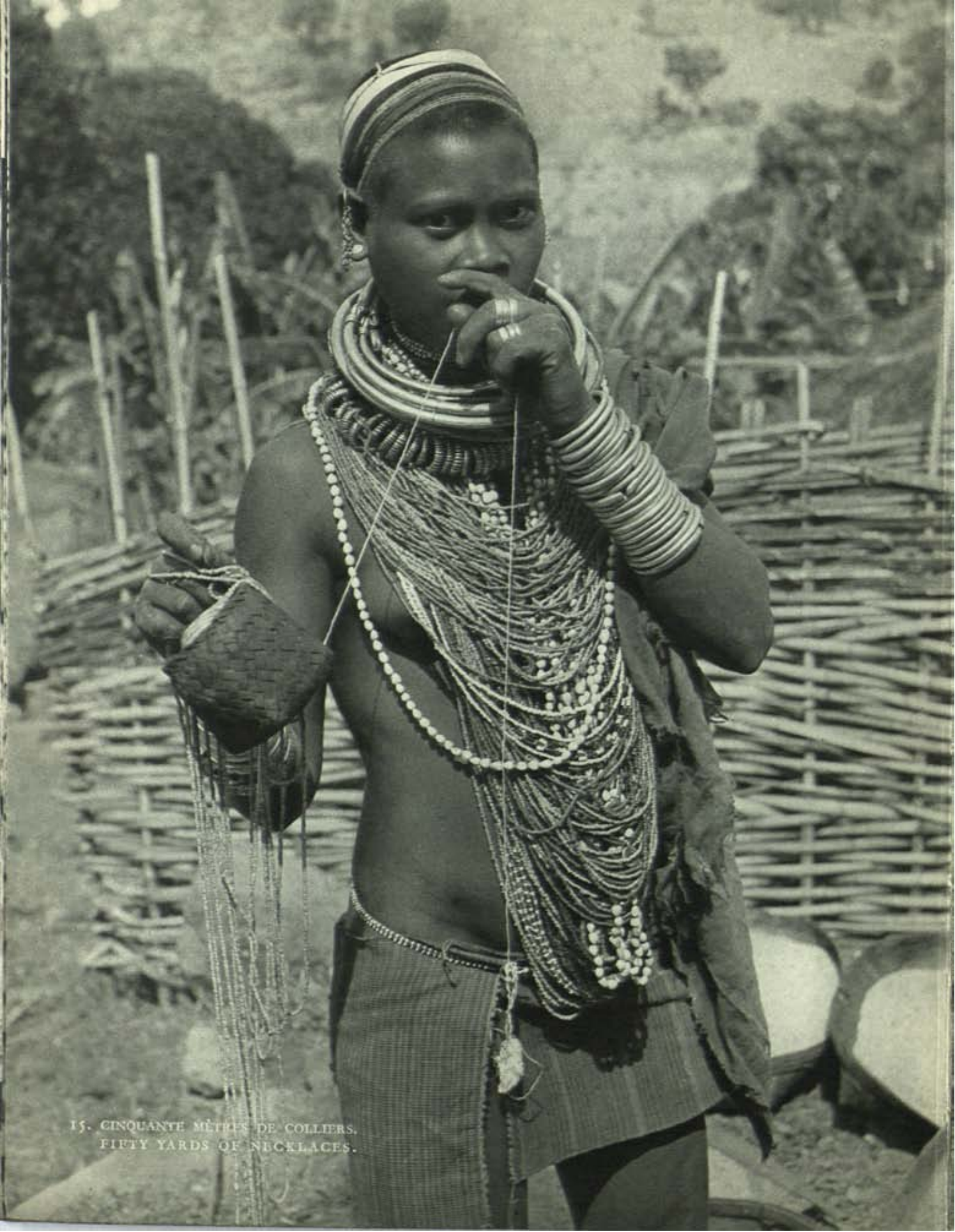
13. LES FEMMES ONT RÉCOLTÉ DES TIGES DE CALOTROPIS...  
THE WOMEN HAVE GATHERED MUDAK STALKS...





14. POUR EN FAIRE DES PAGES,  
TO MAKE LOIN-CLOTHS.





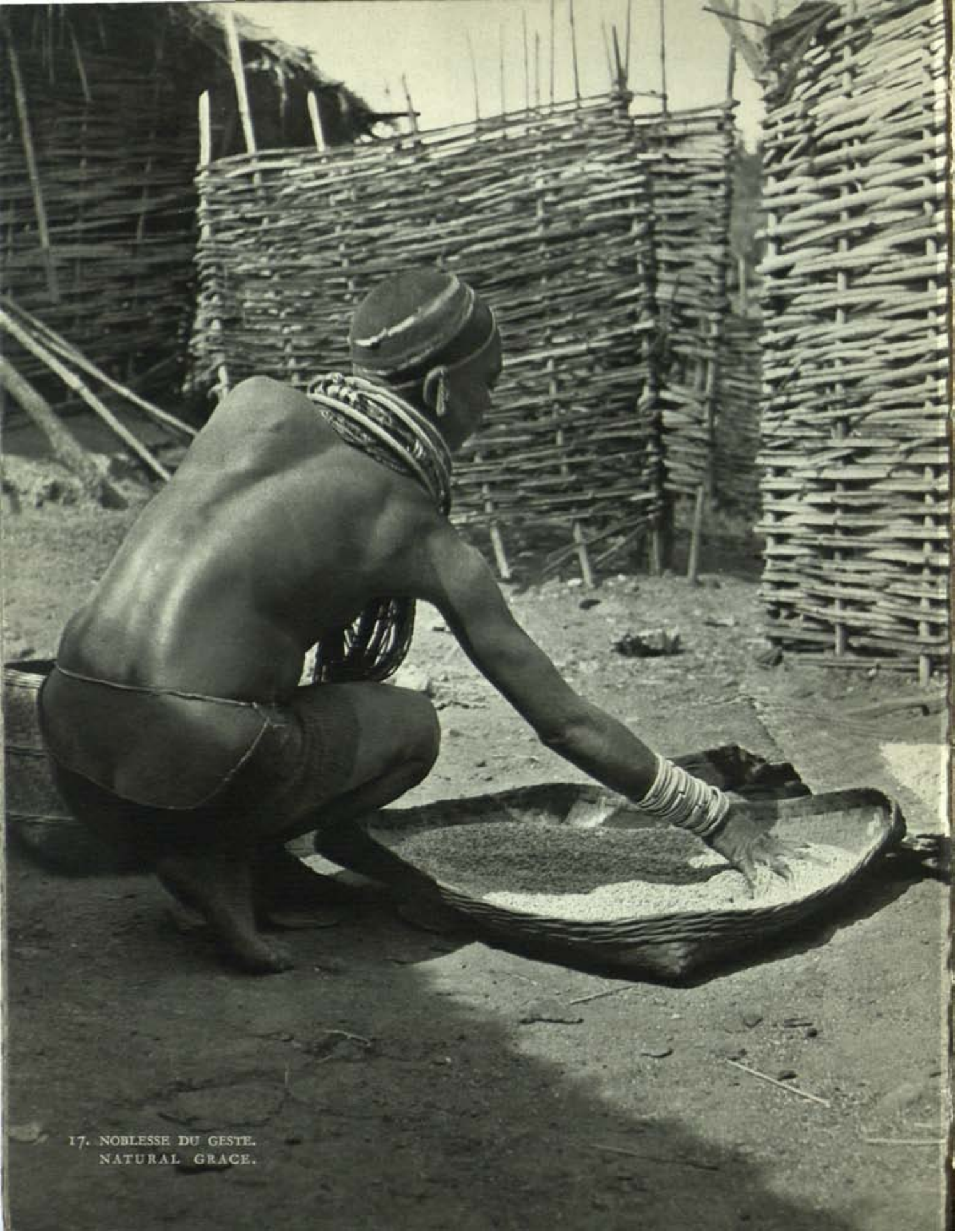
15. CINQUANTE MÈTRES DE COLLIERS.  
FIFTY YARDS OF NECKLACES.





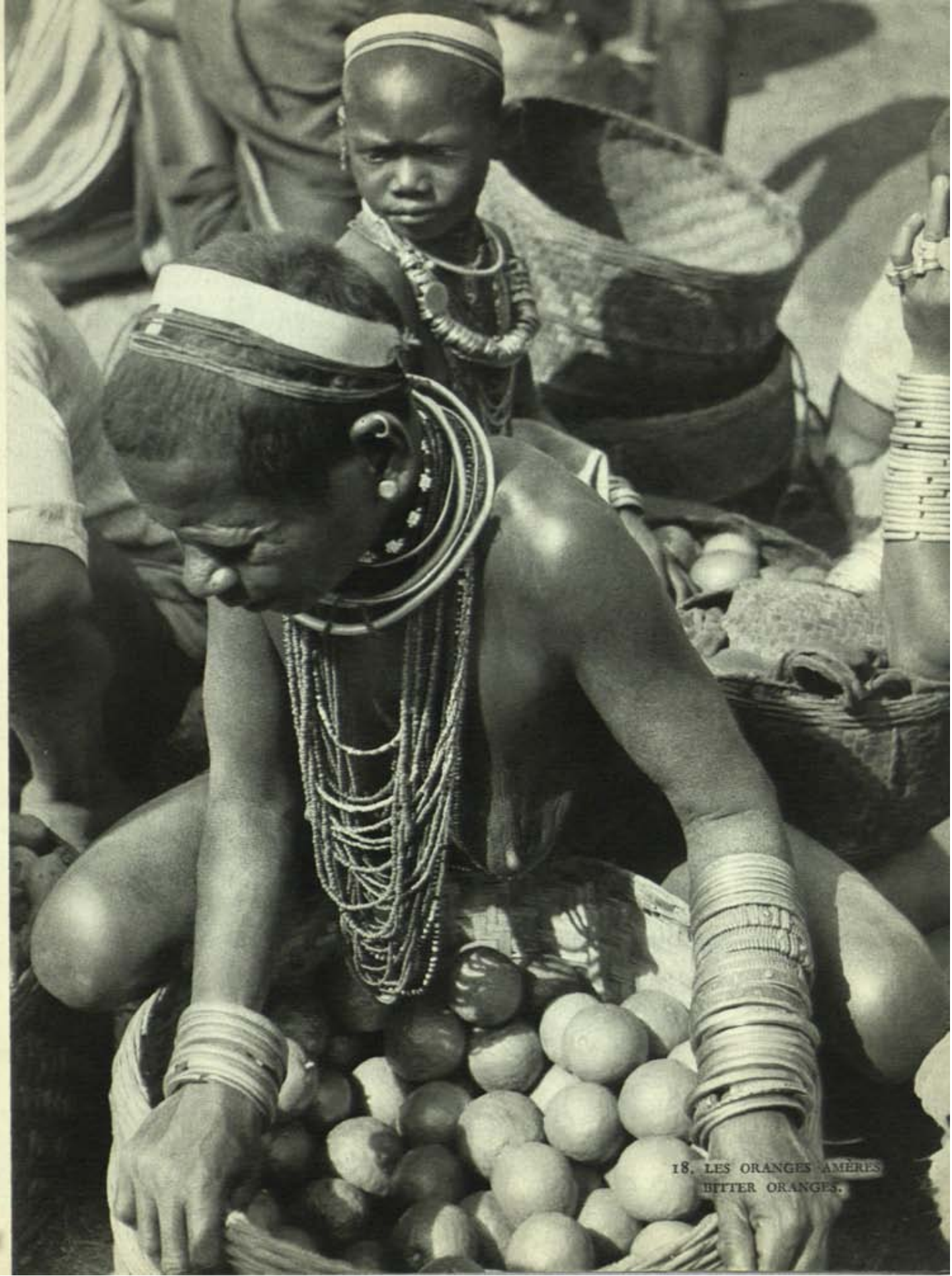
16. QUARANTE CENTIMÈTRES DE PAGNE.  
HALF A YARD OF LOIN-CLOTH.





17. NOBLESSE DU GESTE.  
NATURAL GRACE.





18. LES ORANGES AMÈRES  
BITTER ORANGES.





19. EN ATTENDANT LE RETOUR DES CHASSEURS.  
AWAITING THE RETURN OF THE HUNTERS





20. SOMA-SIZA, LE FILS DU CHEF.  
SOMA-SIZA, THE CHIEF'S SON.





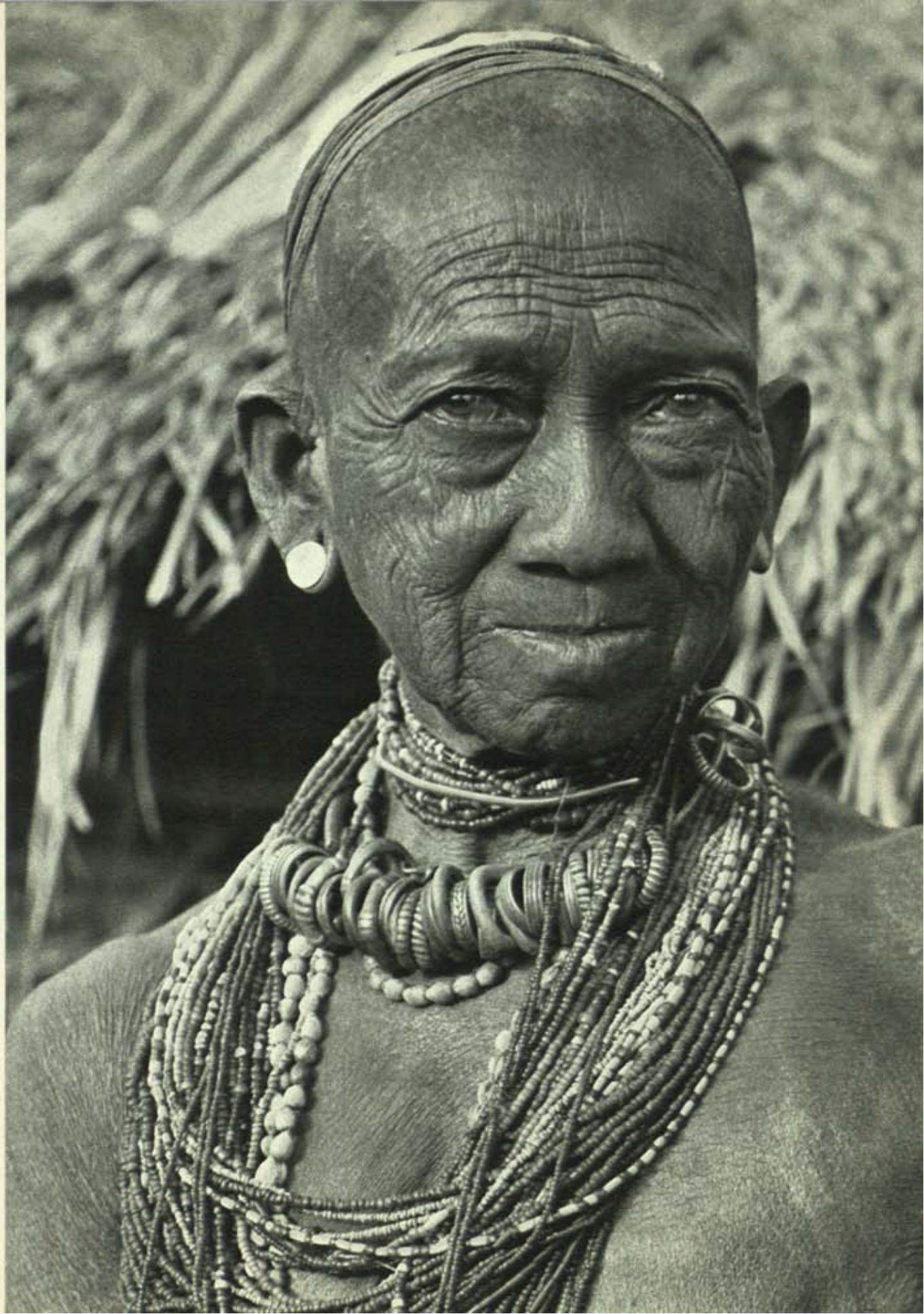
21-22. MOUNDLIPADA, LE VILLAGE DES VACHES NAINES.  
MOUNDLIPADA, THE VILLAGE OF DWARF COWS.



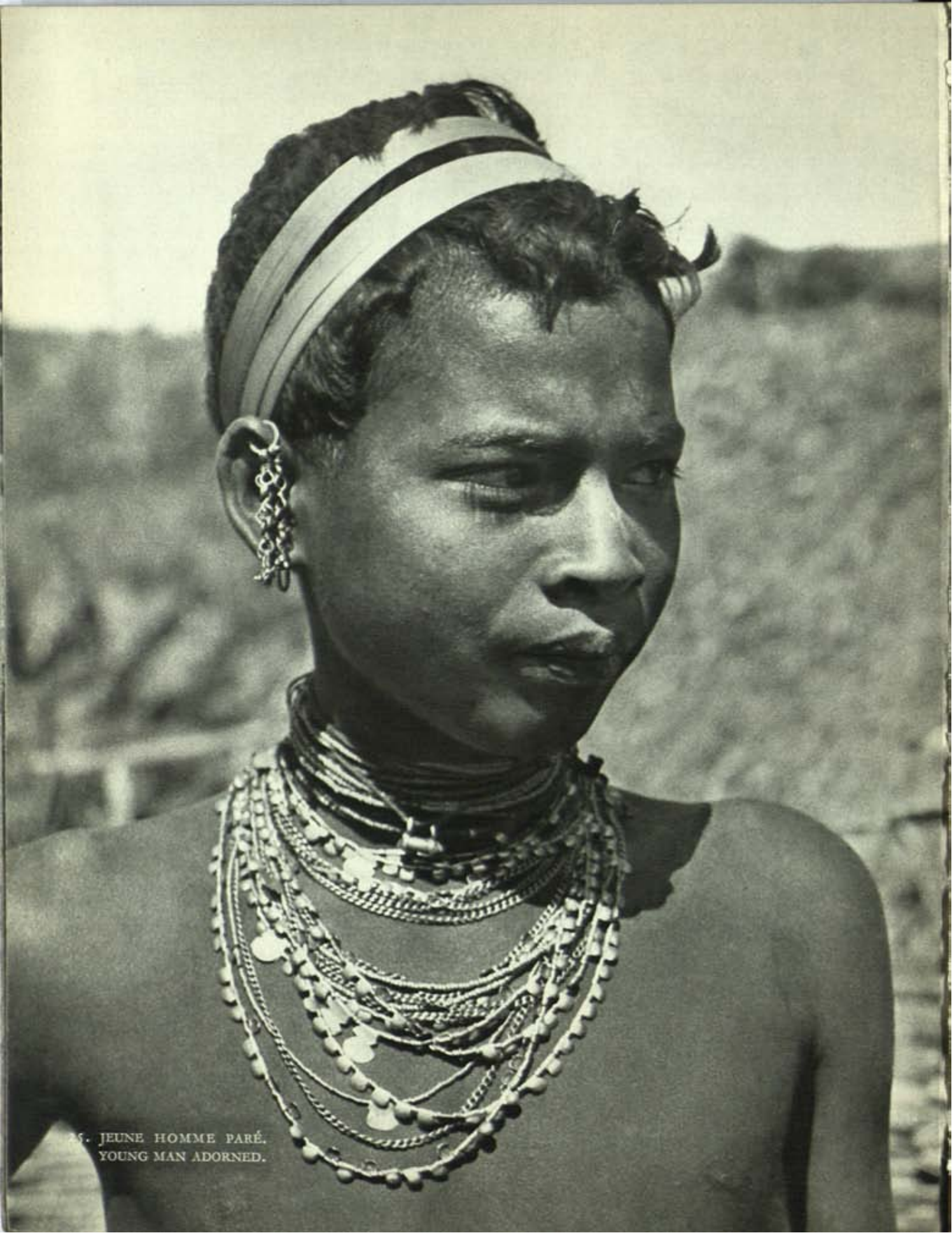


23-24. ADVARA CONNAÎT LE SECRET DES SIGNES.  
ADVARA KNOWS THE SECRET OF SIGNS.









M. JEUNE HOMME PARÉ.  
YOUNG MAN ADORNED.





26. CONFIDENCES DE JEUNES FILLES.  
YOUNG GIRLS' CONFIDENCES.



27. ODVARICK PART À LA PÊCHE.  
ODVARICK GOES FISHING.







## THE GADABAS



When Lakshman created the Earth, the Earth found herself in darkness, lit only briefly now and again. The Sun and the Moon were husband and wife, and so beautiful was the Moon that the Sun never left her side; he stayed constantly at home and spent his time caressing her and loving her. It was only when he left the house to seek rest that the Earth received a little light. The Sun was by nature so generous that with each embrace he gave his wife a child. He had no love for the girls, and cast them out, but their mother, who loved them, used to rescue them. When the children grew up, the boys used to beat the girls, and ill-treat them. The girls would weep, the Moon would complain to her husband, and quarrels would result. The Sun considered the boys as his children, and the girls as the Moon's.

One day Lakshman said to himself: "All this is very bad. The Sun never goes out to do his work. He spends the whole of his time making love to his wife, and soon he will have so many children that there will be no room for them in the world. This darkness is very trying for the people, and they may even die of it." Then Lakshman caused a great famine, and even the Sun and the Moon could no longer find nourishment. The Sun was so hungry that he forgot the charms of his wife and went out in search of food. The Moon was left alone. Lakshman came to her and said; "These sons of your husband are rascals. They are planning to kill your charming daughters." The Moon replied: "What can I do?" Lakshman gave her a water-melon, and told her what she should do. When the Sun returned to the house he saw his wife's mouth reddened by the fruit. She had hidden her daughters in the coils of her hair. The Sun asked her what she was doing. "I was so hungry," she said, "that I ate my daughters. You should do the same with your sons." The Sun, who had found no food at all, called his sons and ate every one of them. When he had eaten his fill, he wished to lie with his wife as usual. But the Moon said to him: "First of all let me take my children out of my hair." And the young girls came forth safe and sound. The Sun, who had lost his sons, flew into a rage and split his wife's head open. She ran from the house terrified, and went to find Lakshman. The Sun came to look for her. Laksh-

man rebuked them both, saying: "You shall never see each other again. Go now, do your work, light the world."

But the Sun became bored, and one night he went down to the Earth in the form of a black bull. He came to Tiratapal, near a threshing-ground. The men, who were threshing millet-grass, saw the bull, and captured him. That night, the boys of Tiratapal had gone off to see the girls of Godopal. They enjoyed themselves with the girls until they were tired out, but still the dawn did not break. One of the girls had given her sweetheart a mussel, which he tucked inside his clothing. When they saw that the day did not come, the boys returned home in darkness. They came to the place where the bull was tethered. The mussel fell to the ground and broke open. A young cockerel burst from it and crowed. When the cock crowed, the bull leapt into the air, broke the cord tethering him, and disappeared into the sky. All over the world birds came out of mussels and heralded the dawn.

It is from that day that the Sun has risen to the crowing of the cock.













29. DÉCOUVERTE DU MIROIR.  
DISCOVERY OF THE MIRROR.



30. TAM-TAM POUR UN MARIAGE.  
TOM-TOM FOR A WEDDING.

31. ARRIVÉE DES INVITÉS.  
ARRIVAL OF THE GUESTS.











32-33. LE VILLAGE S'ÉVEILLE.  
THE VILLAGE AWAKES.





34. RITES PROPITIATOIRES.  
PROPIITIATORY RITES.

35. COUPLE NUPITAL.  
THE BRIDAL PAIR.



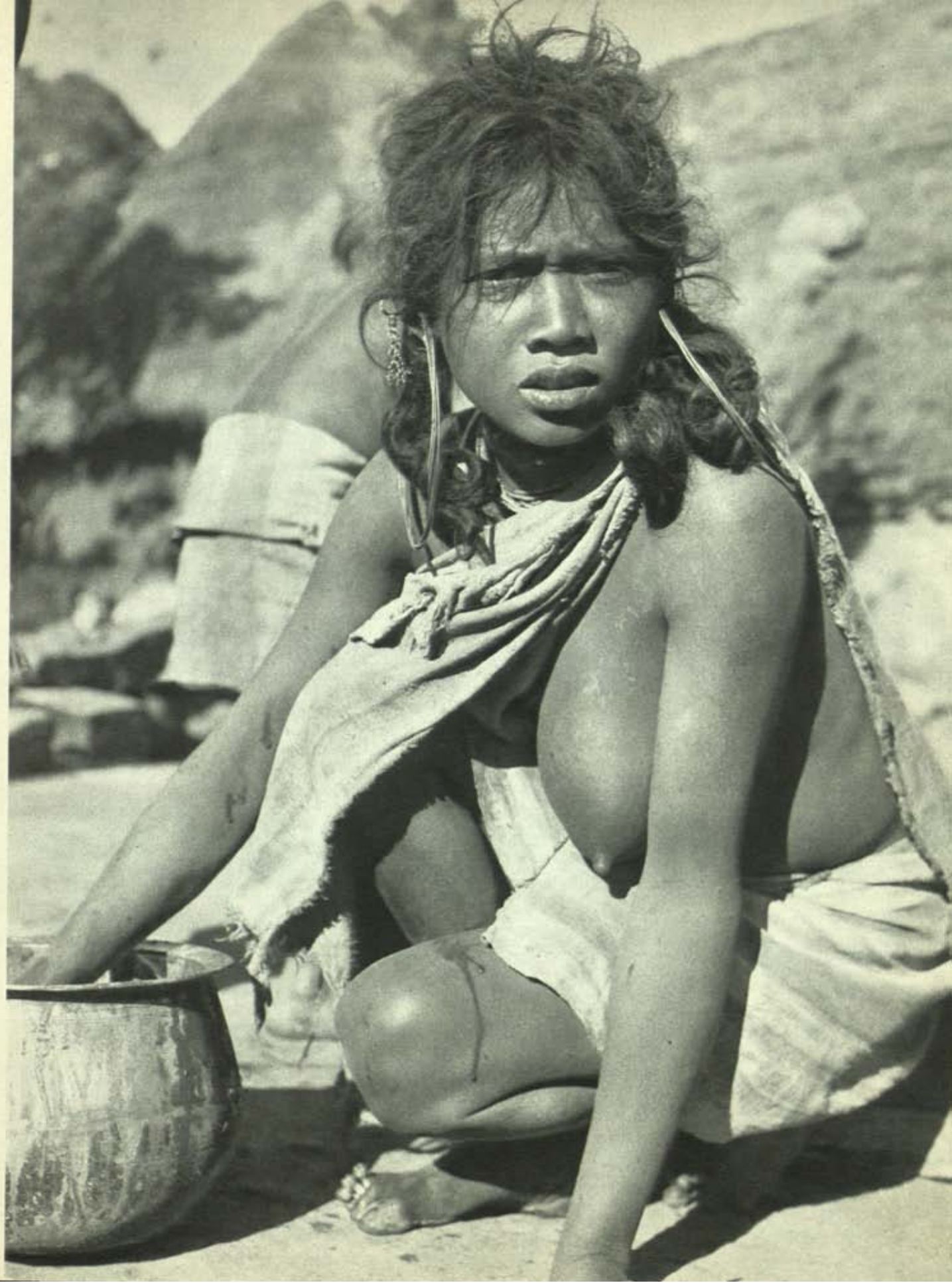




36. LA BÉNEDICTION DE LA MÈRE.  
THE MOTHER'S BLESSING.

37. TOULII, LA JEUNE SORCIERE, N'A QUE FAIRE D'UN MARI.  
TOULII, THE YOUNG WITCH, HAS NO USE FOR A HUSBAND.

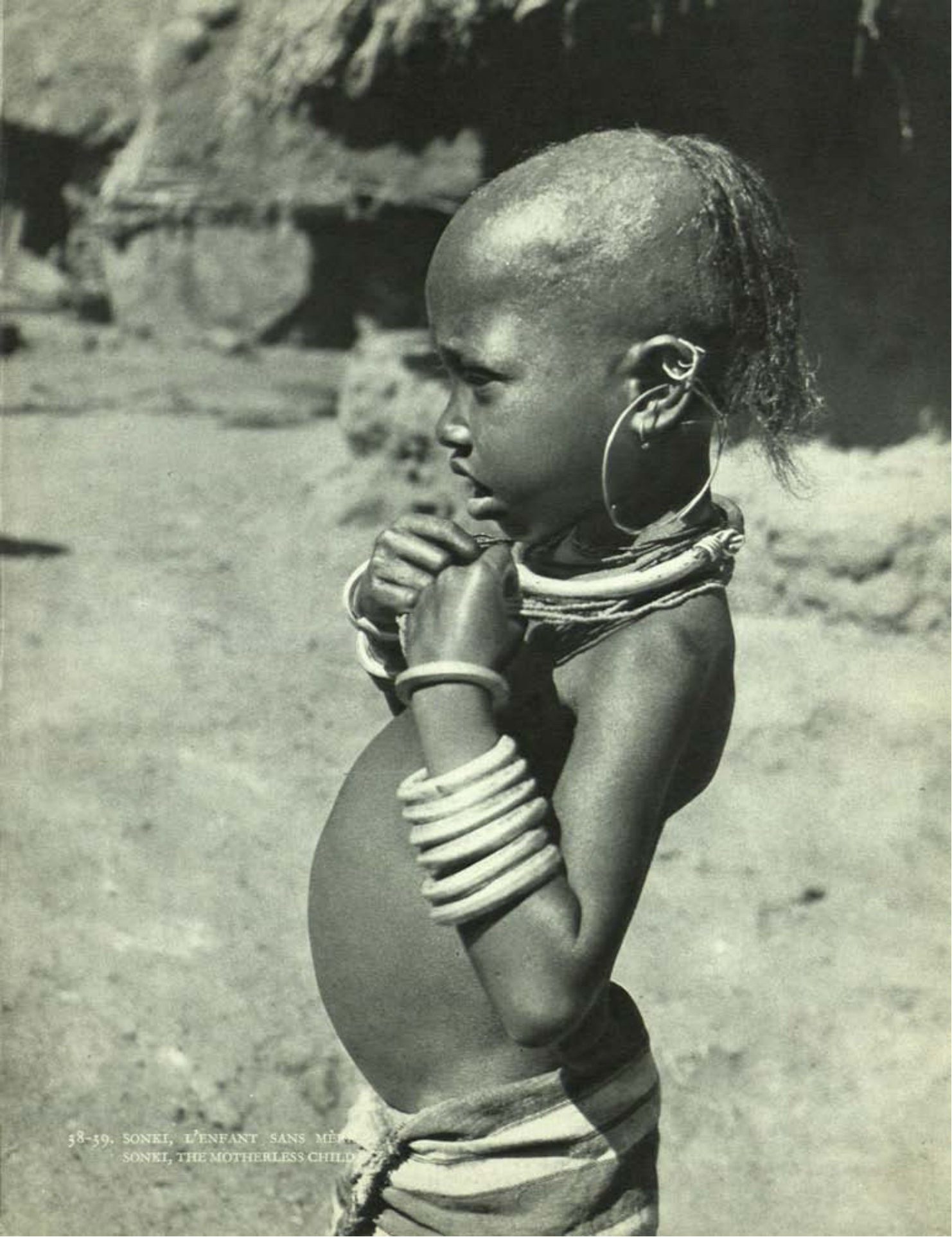












38-39. SONKEI, L'ENFANT SANS MÈRE  
SONKEI, THE MOTHERLESS CHILD





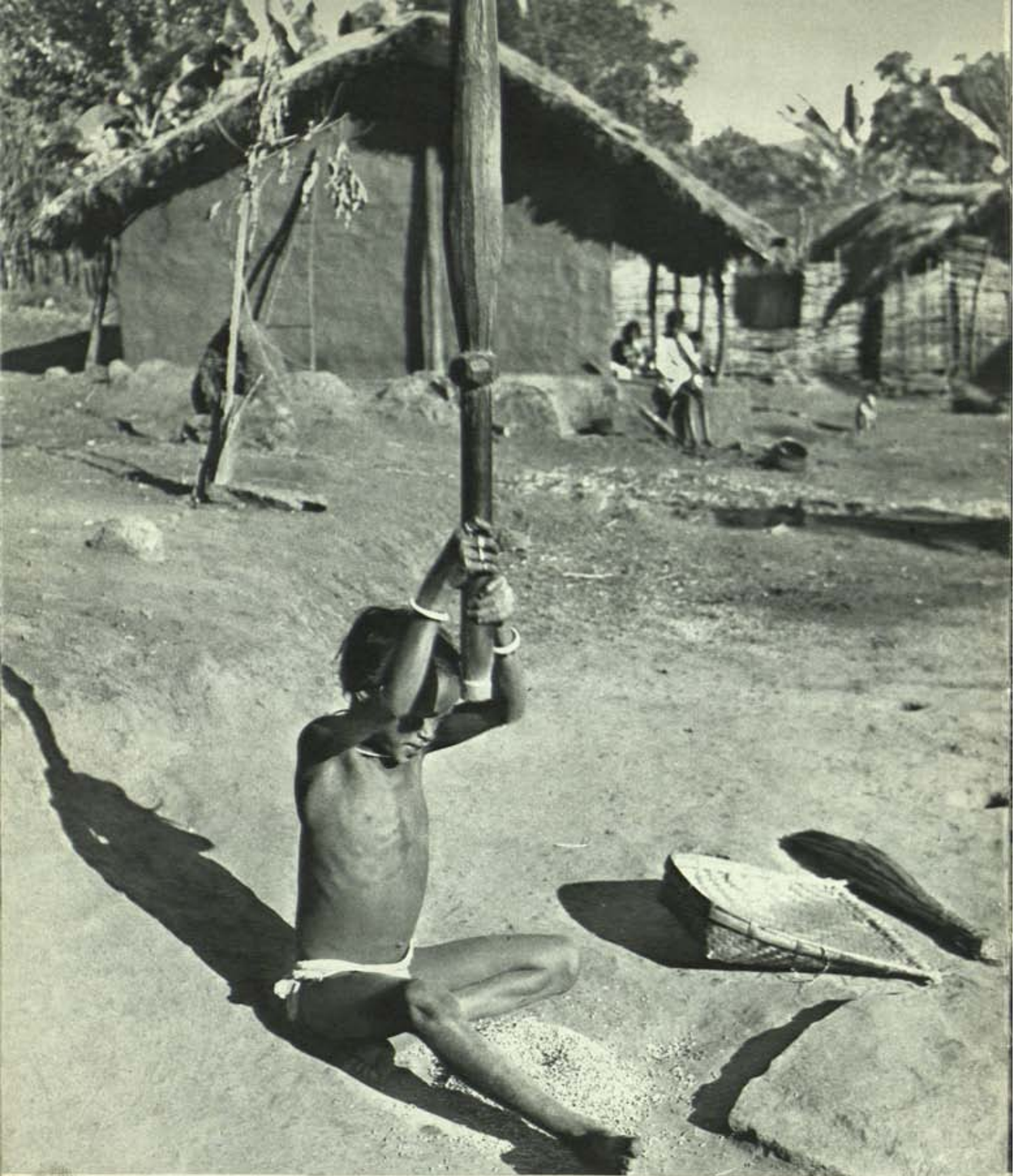
10. LE PRÊTRE SACRIFIE UN JEUNE TAUREAU...  
THE PRIEST SACRIFICES A YOUNG BULL...





41. SOUS L'ŒIL DES VILLAGERS.  
WATCHED BY THE VILLAGERS.





42. LE PETIT MEUNIER.  
THE LITTLE MILLER.





43. LA MAISON DU CHEF.  
THE CHIEF'S HUT.









44-45. OPÉRATIONS DÉLICATES.  
A SKILFUL OPERATION.











## THE KANIS

*The Kani chief spoke as follows:*

*All our tribulations began with the death of our king, Mutu. Long, long ago, my people lived in the valley where lies the great lake of the rains to-day. We were masters of the world to the East, the South and the West. All the tribes obeyed us, for they knew that at mid-day the Sun hovered right over our heads to give counsel to our queen. But our queen grieved, for the Sun was rigidly opposed to her marrying one of the two kings of the North, her only eligible suitors. It was understood by all that the husband of the queen could only be a god. The queen advanced in age and wisdom, but the god did not come. Everyone awaited the moment. On the night of the first moon of the monsoons, the queen was seated on her throne in a bamboo hut when the Serpent god entered. Whistling three times, he glided towards the queen, slid up the right side of her body, curled round her neck, slid down the left side and disappeared into the night. Soon the queen was with child, and two years later she was delivered of a wonderful boy, who was called 'Mutu,' meaning chief. Mutu grew up surrounded by the loving attentions of his mother, who was aware that he would be her only son, and by the veneration of the Kani people, who saw him as the hope of their race. When Mutu reached the age of fifteen, he took his mother's place in the exercising of power. His first act was to leave for the North, for from the North had come the news that his neighbours, the two kings, had gone to war under some foolish pretext. Mutu wished to speak to the two kings and stop the war. He set out on his most valiant elephant, accompanied by his guard, and leaving his army under the command of his mother, after charging her to be vigilant and to keep a close watch on the frontiers, for he feared that if his mission failed, one of the kings of the North might take advantage of his absence to invade the Kani territory. Then, leaving by the Tiger pass, he told her that he intended to return in a month's time by the same route. So great was the prestige which Mutu enjoyed that on the mere announcement of his departure the two kings of the North made peace*

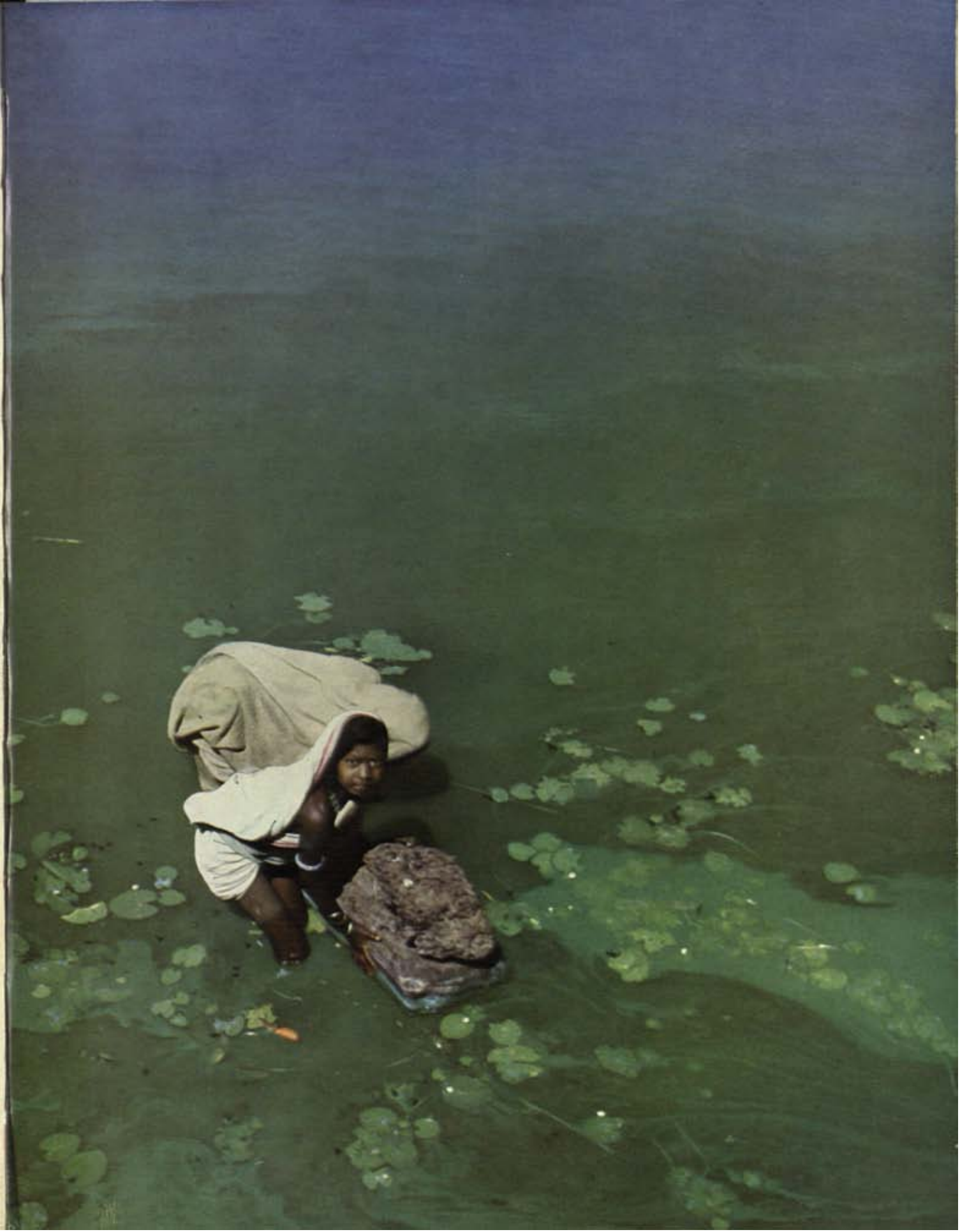


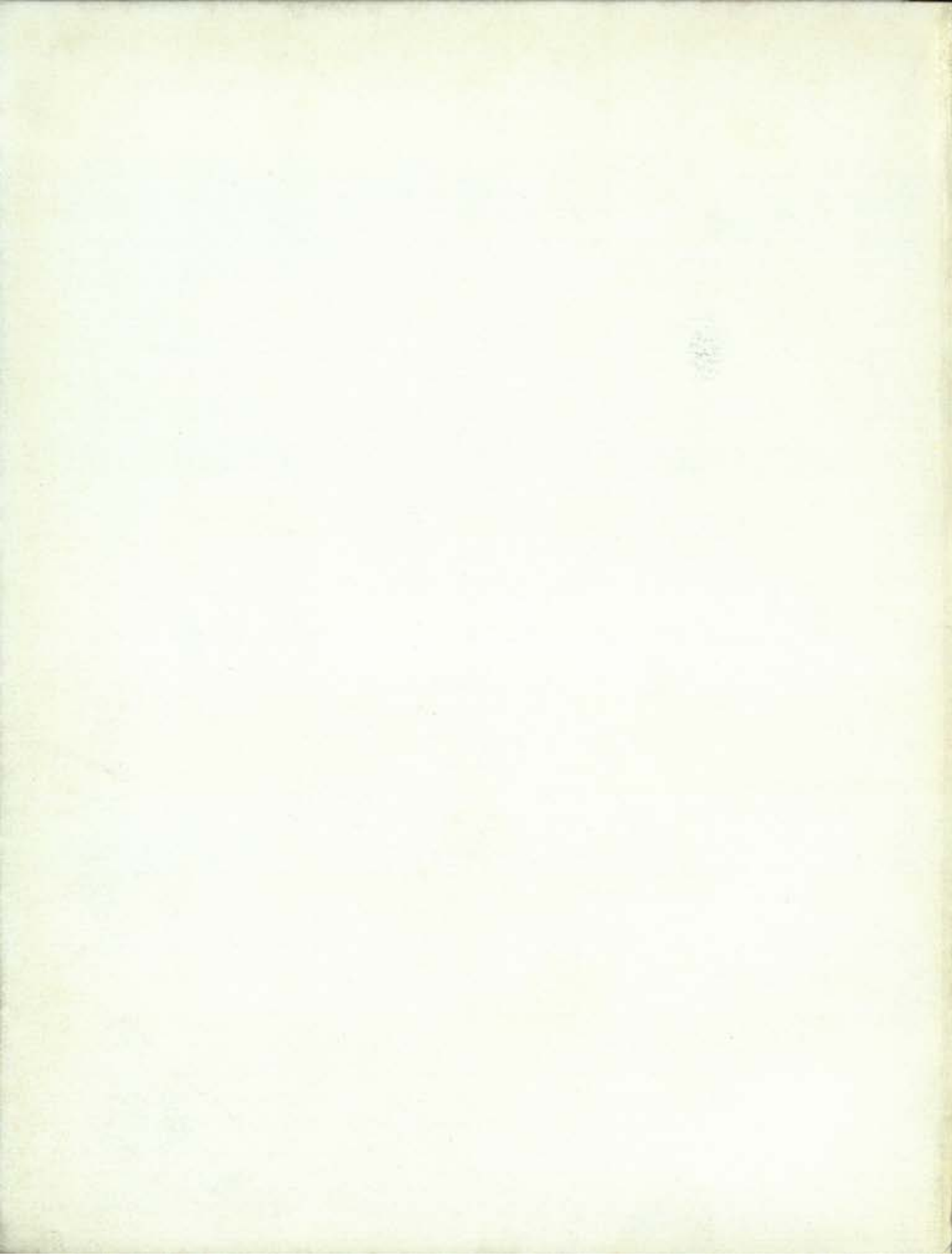
with each other in order to receive Mutu with feasts worthy of the son of a god. Two weeks later, Mutu set off for his own country again to give the glad tidings, and, wishing to save time, he decided to take the shortest route—that is to say, the one over the Pepper pass. The Kani soldiers guarding the pass, alarmed at the sight of the small band which constituted Mutu's escort, and thinking they were faced with a hostile army, sent a messenger to the Queen for her orders. 'Stop the invaders,' she said, 'and bring me the head of their chief.' The Kani soldiers advanced towards what they thought were the enemy troops, and told them that the Queen had demanded the head of their chief. Mutu, in despair, and thinking he had been betrayed by his own men, took his sword, placed the point to his breast, and threw himself down from his elephant. It was only when he lay on the ground, pierced to the heart, that the Kani soldiers recognized their king. Mutu's body was taken to the Queen who, at the sight of her son's mortal remains, died of grief.

Since that day the Kanis have never had a king. They retreated into the mountains, pursued by divine wrath.











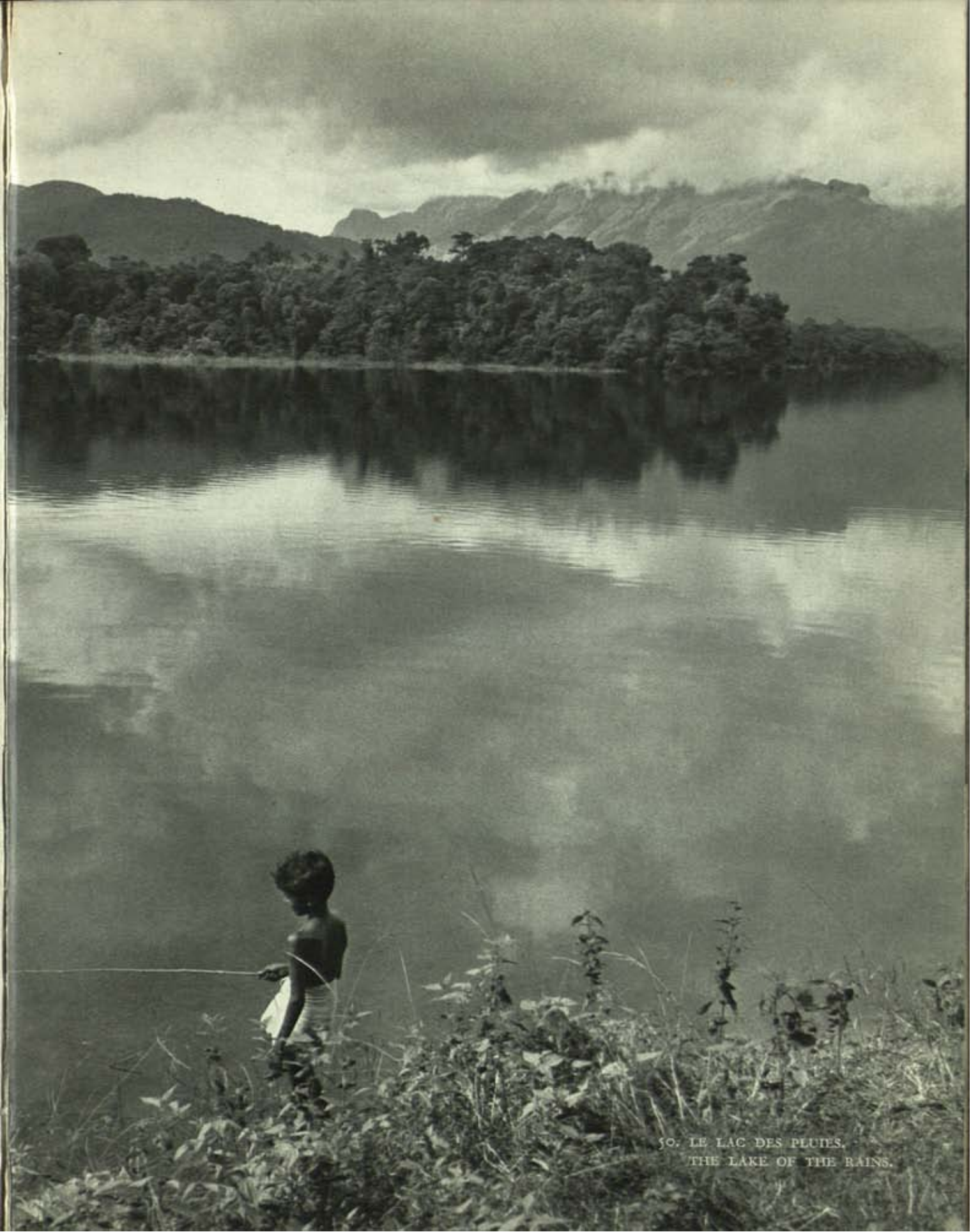






49. EMBARQUEMENT POUR ADA-KADOU.  
EMBARCKING FOR ADA-KADOU.





50. LE LAC DES PLUIES.  
THE LAKE OF THE RAINS.



17777

ST. ADA-KADOU, 2,130. —  
ADA-KADOU, 6,500 FT.





52. LES ENFANTS DE LA FORÊT.  
CHILDREN OF THE FOREST.









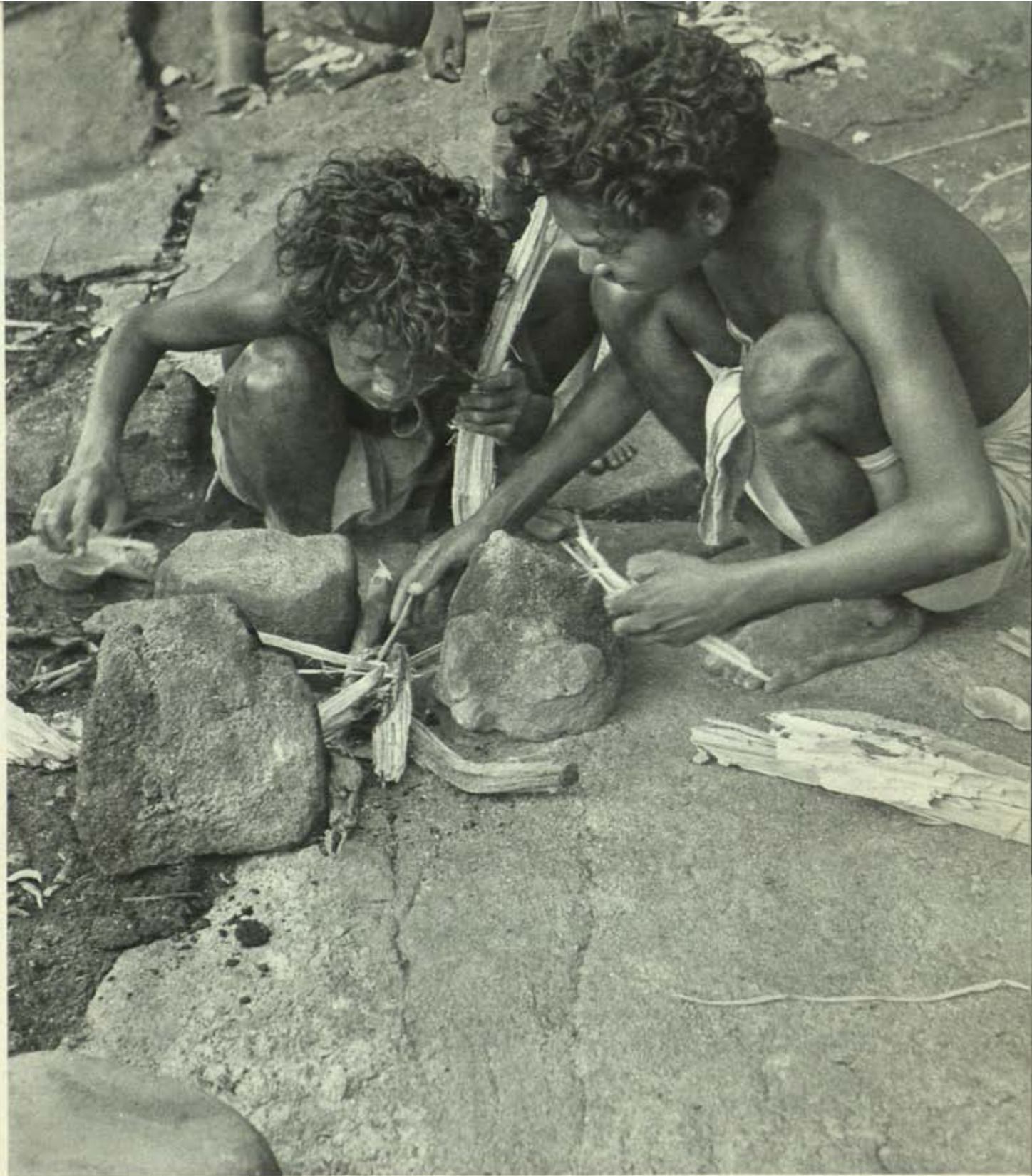
53. MÉLANCOLIE.  
MELANCHOLY.

54. LE FAUVE RÔDE, MIEUX VAUT NE PAS DESCENDRE.  
THE WILD BEAST IS ON THE PROWL, BETTER NOT GO DOWN.









55. PERDRE AU JEU, GAGNER EN AMITIÉ.  
LOSE AT PLAY, WIN FRIENDSHIP.

56. LE MIRACLE DU FEU.  
THE MIRACLE OF FIRE.





57. CHEF MOUTOU ET SA FAMILLE.  
CHIEF MOUTOU AND HIS FAMILY.



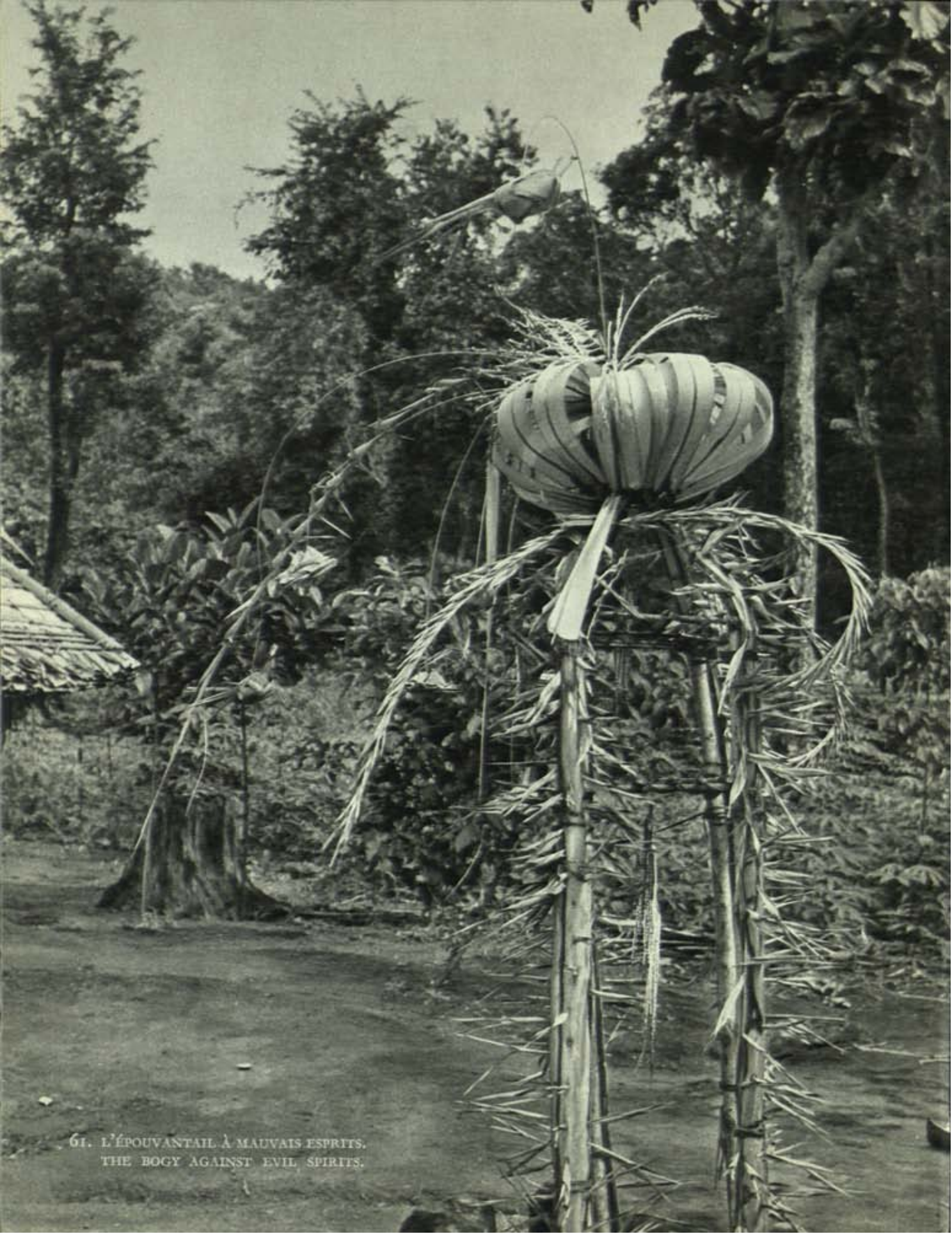


58. À QUOI RÉVENT LES JEUNES FILLES ?  
WHAT DO GIRLS DREAM OF ?









61. L'ÉPOUVANTAIL À MAUVAIS ESPRITS.  
THE BOGY AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS.





62. LE TAMBOUR TIENT LE TIGRE À DISTANCE.  
THE DRUM KEEPS THE TIGER AWAY.



63. ARBRES DE MA FORÊT, VOUS CONNAISSEZ MON ÂME.  
TREES OF MY FOREST, YOU KNOW MY SOUL.







## THE TODAS



*This is the story of how Öñ, the son of Pithi, created the buffaloes and the Todas, and how he became sovereign of Amnòdr, the kingdom of the dead, where he now lives.*

*One day Öñ went with his wife Pinârkûrs to Médrpem. There he put up an iron bar which stretched from one end of the pem to the other. Öñ stood at one end of the bar and brought forth buffaloes from the earth, sixteen hundred in number. Then Pinârkûrs tried to produce buffaloes and she stood at the other end of the bar and produced eighteen hundred buffaloes.*

*Behind Öñ's buffaloes there came out of the earth a man, holding the tail of the last buffalo, and this was the first Toda. Öñ took one of the man's ribs from the right side of his body and made a woman, who was the first Toda woman. The Todas then increased in number very rapidly, so that at the end of the first week there were about a hundred.*

*The descendants of the buffaloes created by Öñ became sacred buffaloes, while the descendants of those created by his wife are the ordinary buffaloes.*

*Öñ had a son called Püv. One day Püv was churning in the dairy with a ring on the little finger of his right hand. When the dairyman goes to fetch water he should always take the churning stick out of the vessel in which the milk is churned. On this occasion Püv left it in the churn and went out to fetch water. As he was going a black bird tried to check him, saying "tîs, tîs, tîs," meaning "Don't go to the water," but Püv paid no attention and went on. When he was taking the water the ring dropped from his little finger into the spring. Püv saw the ring in the water, but could not reach it, and so he got into the spring. The water was not deep, and yet as soon as he stepped into the spring it completely covered him and he was drowned. When Öñ found that his son was lost he cried very bitterly and covered himself with his cloak. When Öñ covered himself he looked downwards and saw, as through a veil, his son in Amnòdr playing with the ring, putting it on and off his finger.*

*When Öñ saw that his son was in Amnòdr he did not like to leave him*

there alone and decided to go away to the same place. So he called together all the people and the buffaloes and the trees to come and bid him farewell. All the people came except a man of Kwòdrdoni named Arsankutan. He and his family did not come. All the buffaloes came except the buffaloes of Kwòdrdoni. Some trees also failed to come. Õn blessed all the people, buffaloes and trees present, but said that because Arsankutan had not come he and his people should die by sorcery at the hands of the Kurumbas, and that because the buffaloes of Kwòdrdoni had not come they should be killed by tigers, and that the trees which had not come should bear bitter fruit. Since that time the Todas have feared the Kurumbas, and buffaloes have been killed by tigers. All the Todas and all the buffaloes appear to have suffered for the evil deeds of Arsankutan and the buffaloes of Kwòdrdoni.

Then Õn went away to Amnòdr and since that time Õn has ruled over Amnòdr, which is sometimes called Õmnòdr after him.<sup>1</sup>

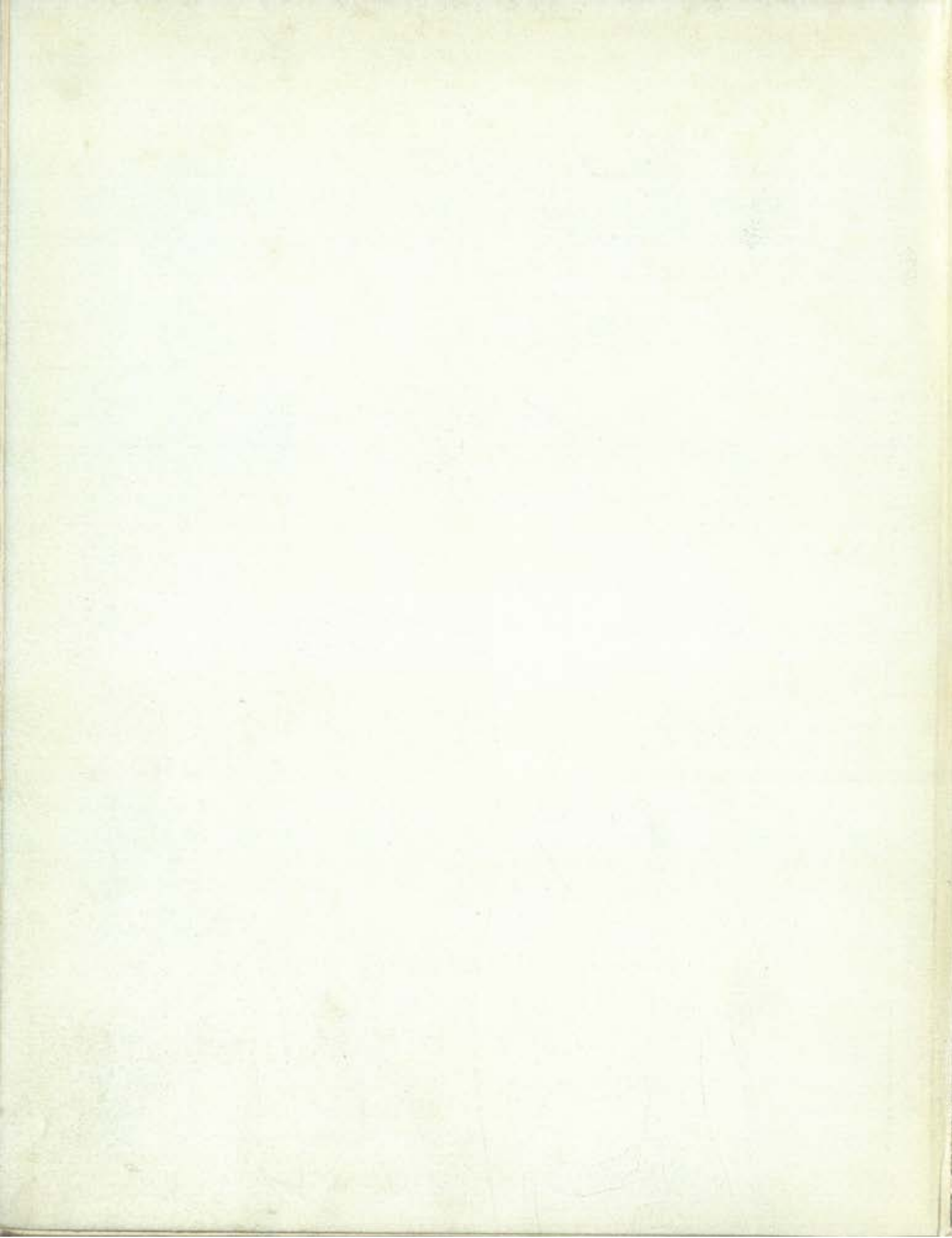
<sup>1</sup> This version of the Toda legend is based on that appearing in *The Todas*, by W. H. R. Rivers, (Macmillan, 1906).

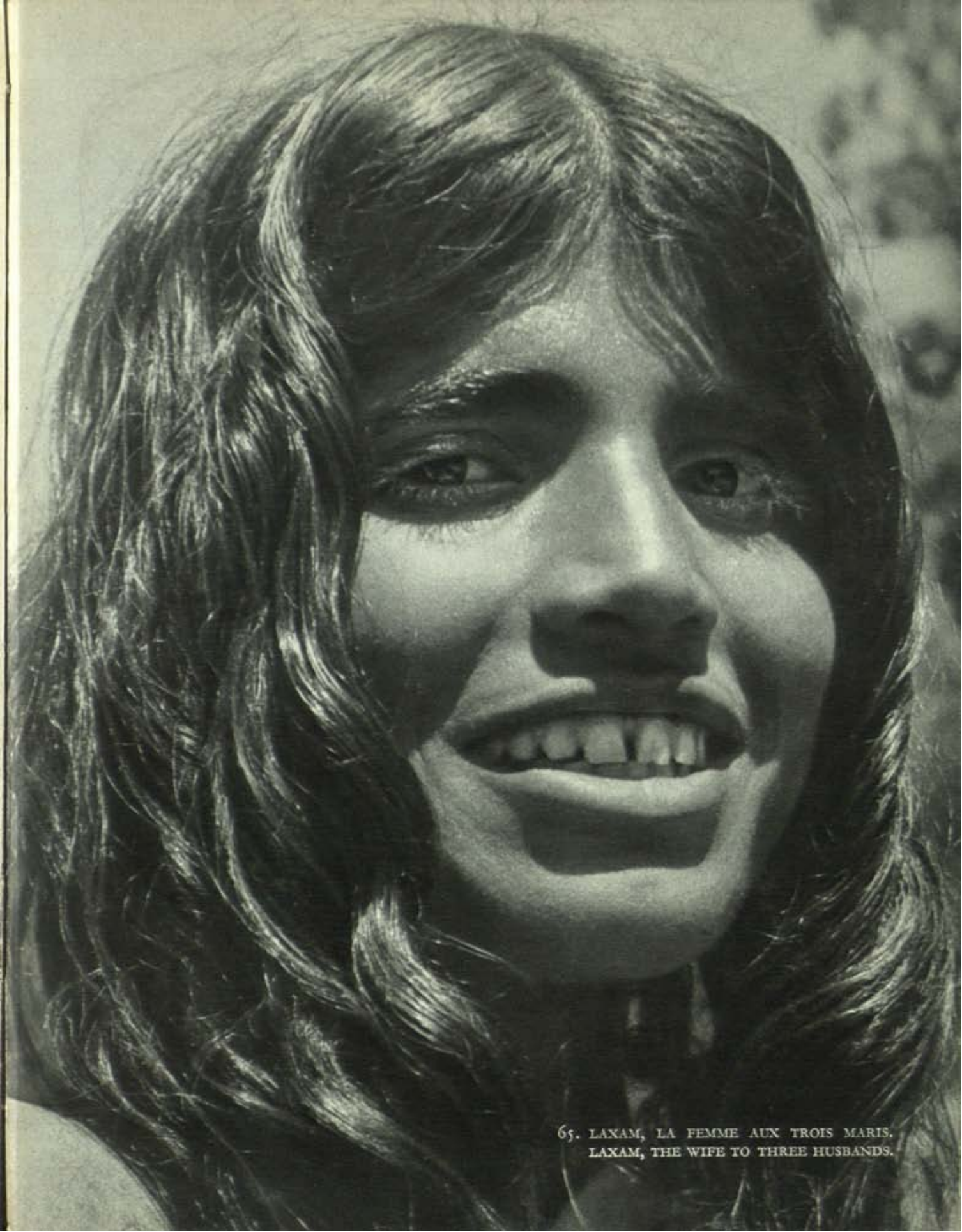






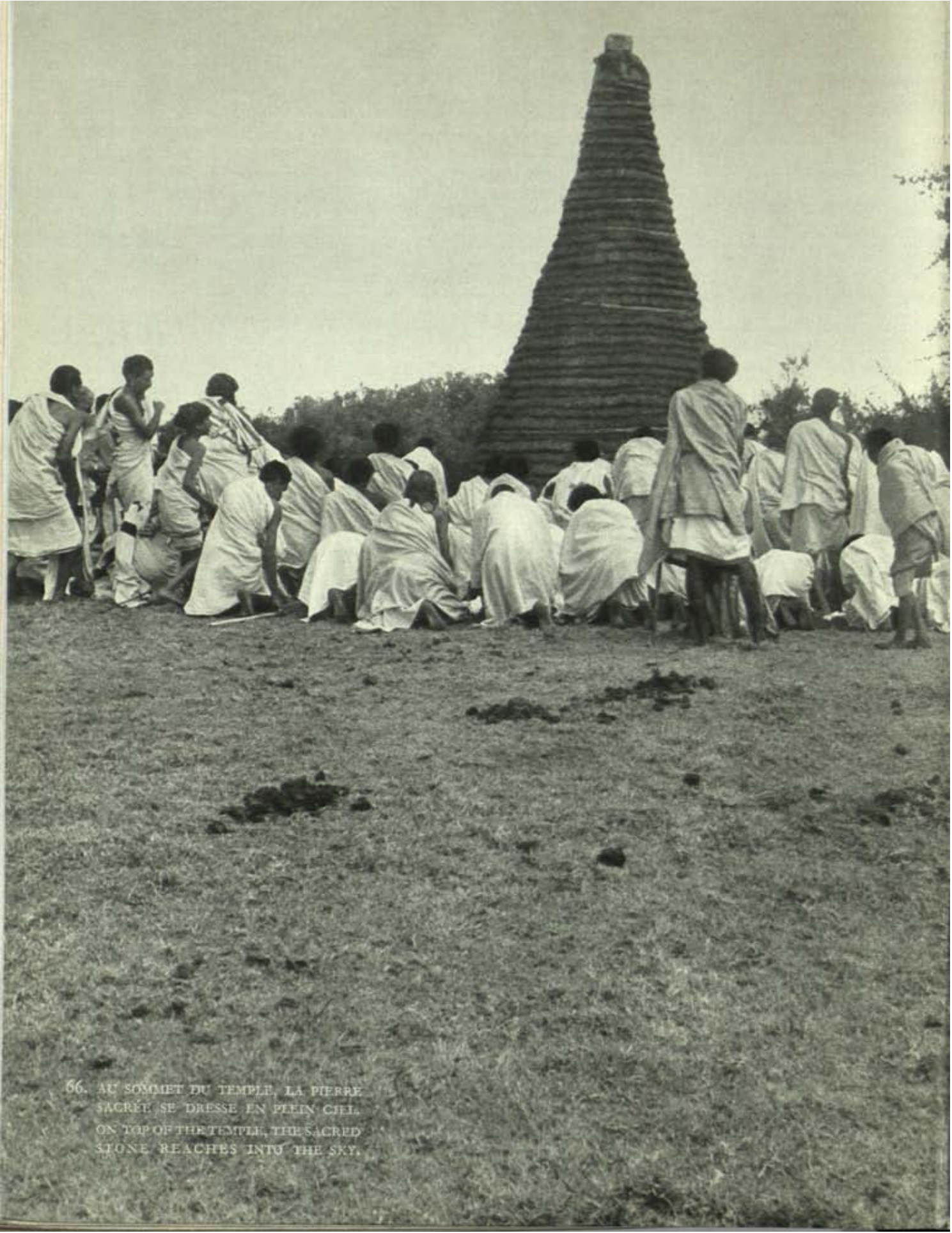






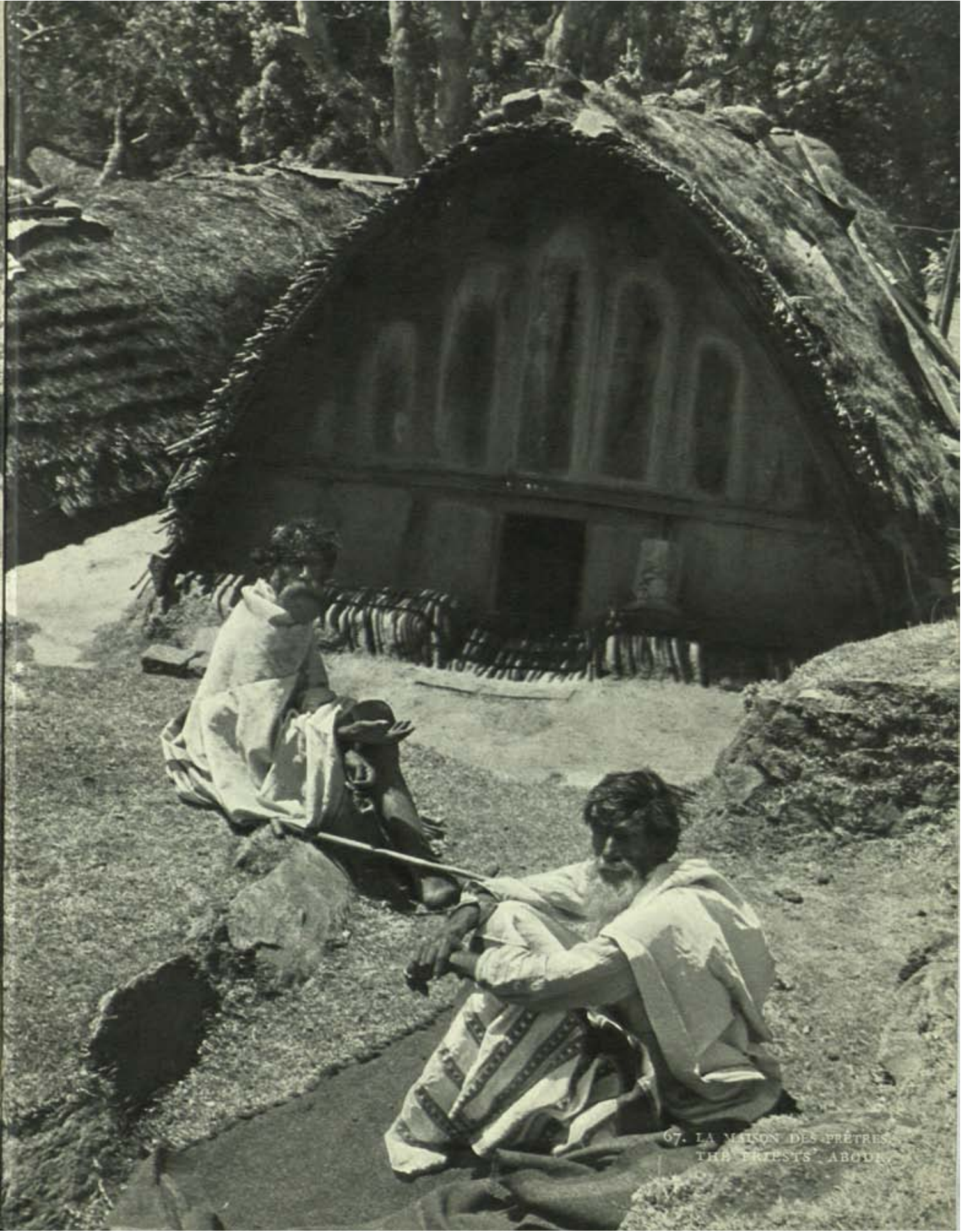
65. LAXAM, LA FEMME AUX TROIS MARIS.  
LAXAM, THE WIFE TO THREE HUSBANDS.





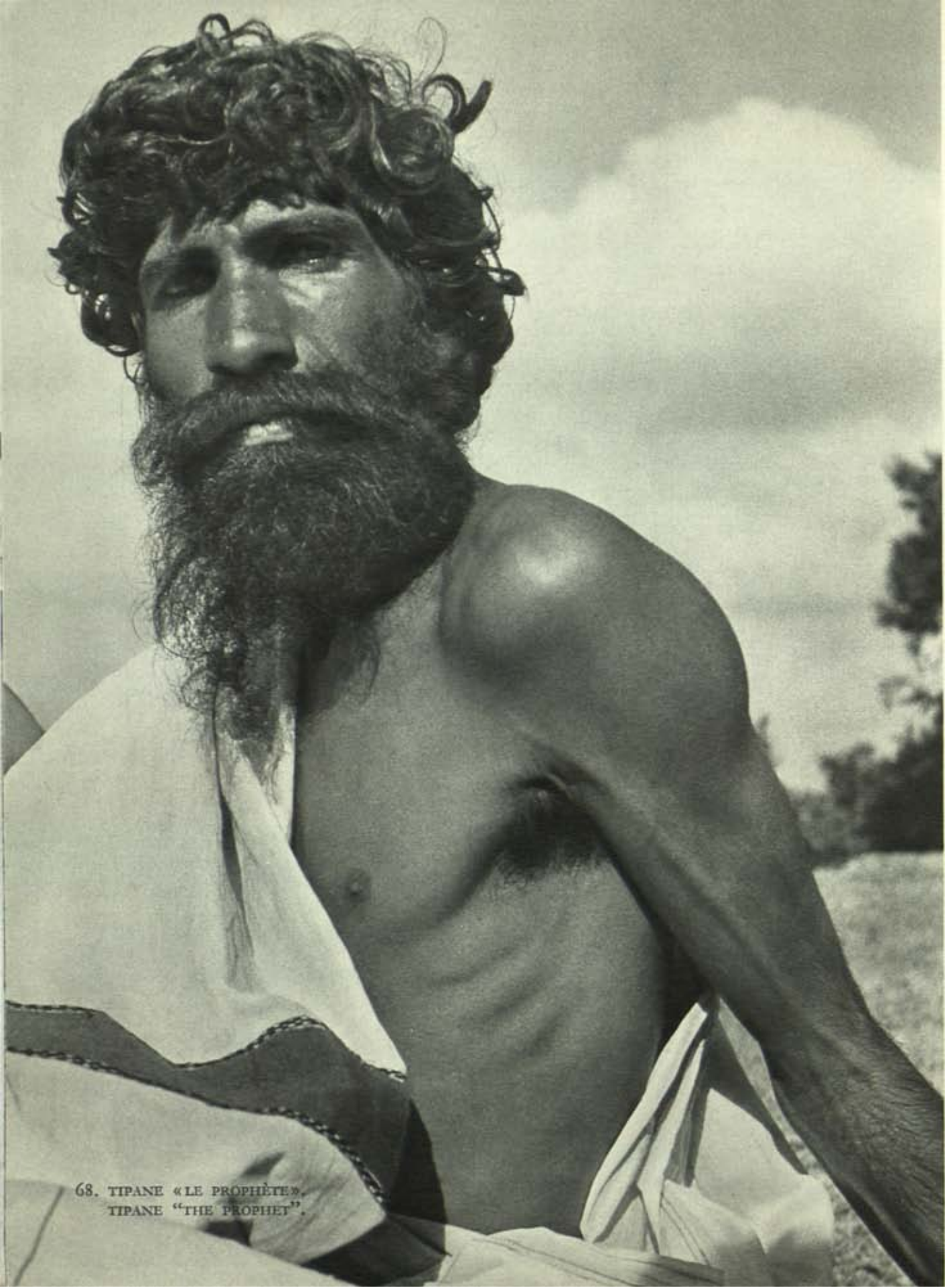
66. AU SOMMET DU TEMPLE, LA PIERRE  
SACRÉE SE DRESSE EN PEUIN CIEL.  
ON TOP OF THE TEMPLE, THE SACRED  
STONE REACHES INTO THE SKY.





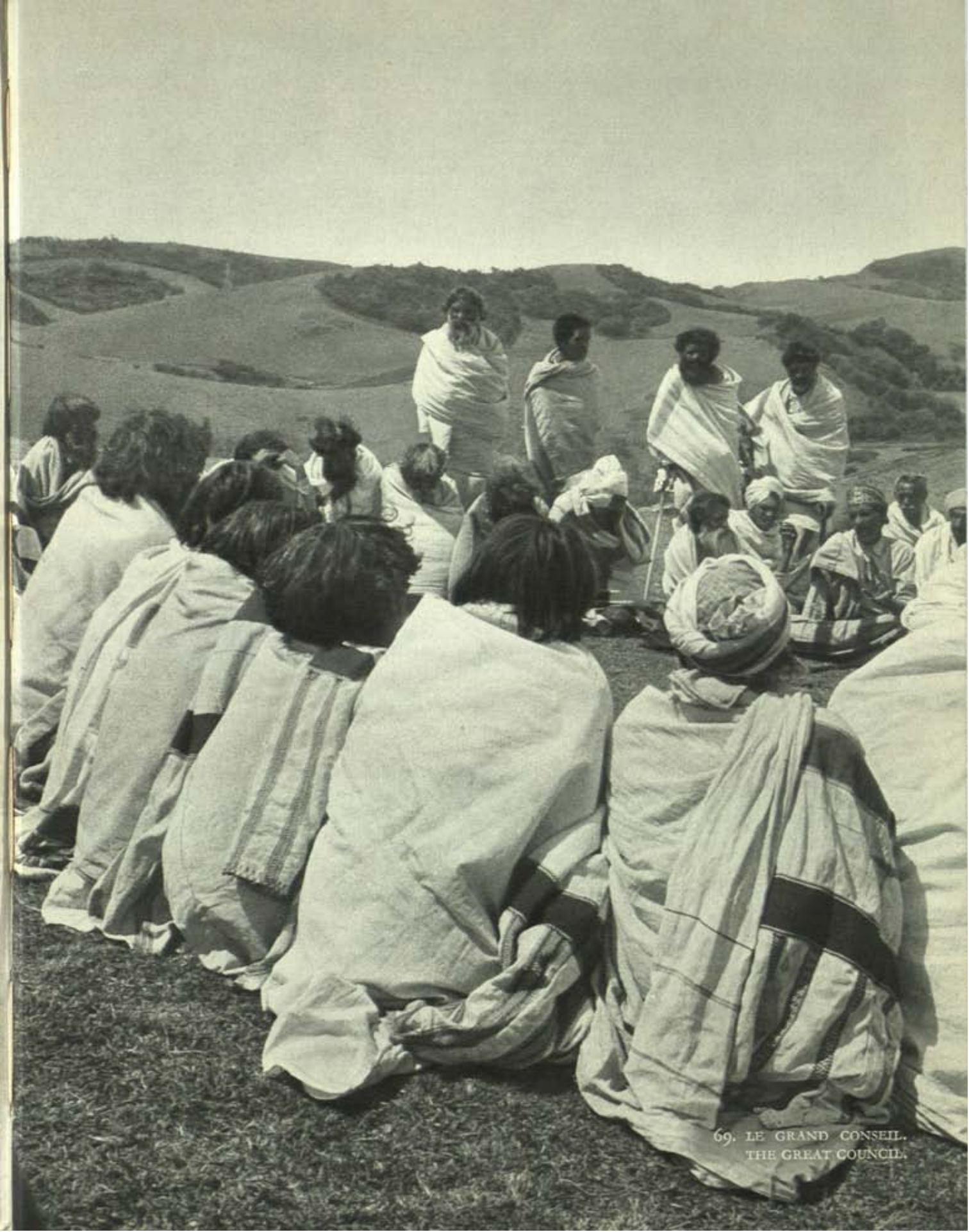
67. LA MAISON DES PRÊTRES.  
THE PRIESTS' HOUSE.





68. TIPANE «LE PROPHÈTE».  
TIPANE "THE PROPHET".





69. LE GRAND CONSEIL.  
THE GREAT COUNCIL.





70. MUSICIENS DE LA TRIBU VASSALE KOTHAS.  
MUSICIANS OF THE VASSAL TRIBE, THE KOTHAS.

71. LA DANSE DES SEIGNEURS.  
THE DANCE OF THE LORDS.

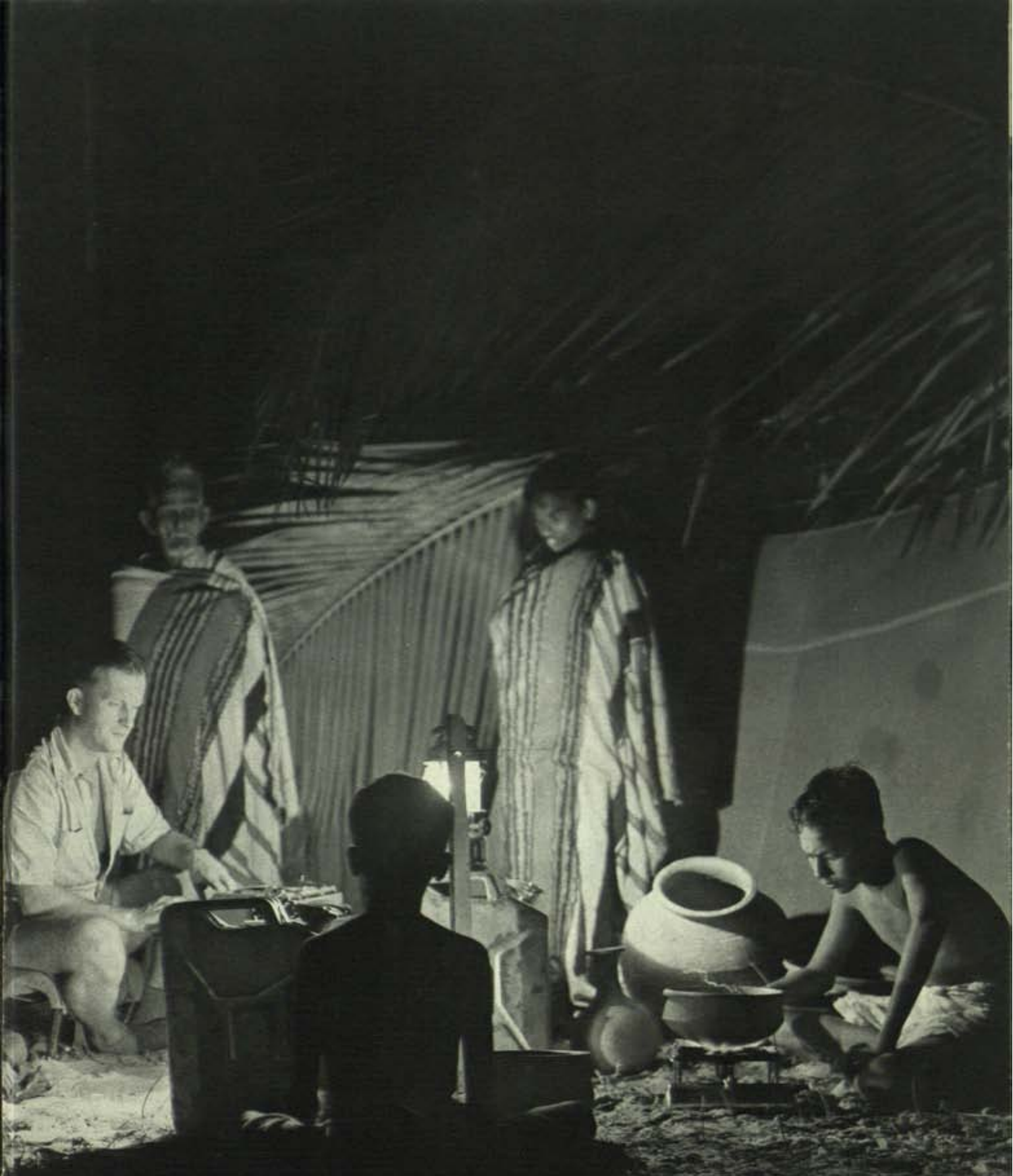






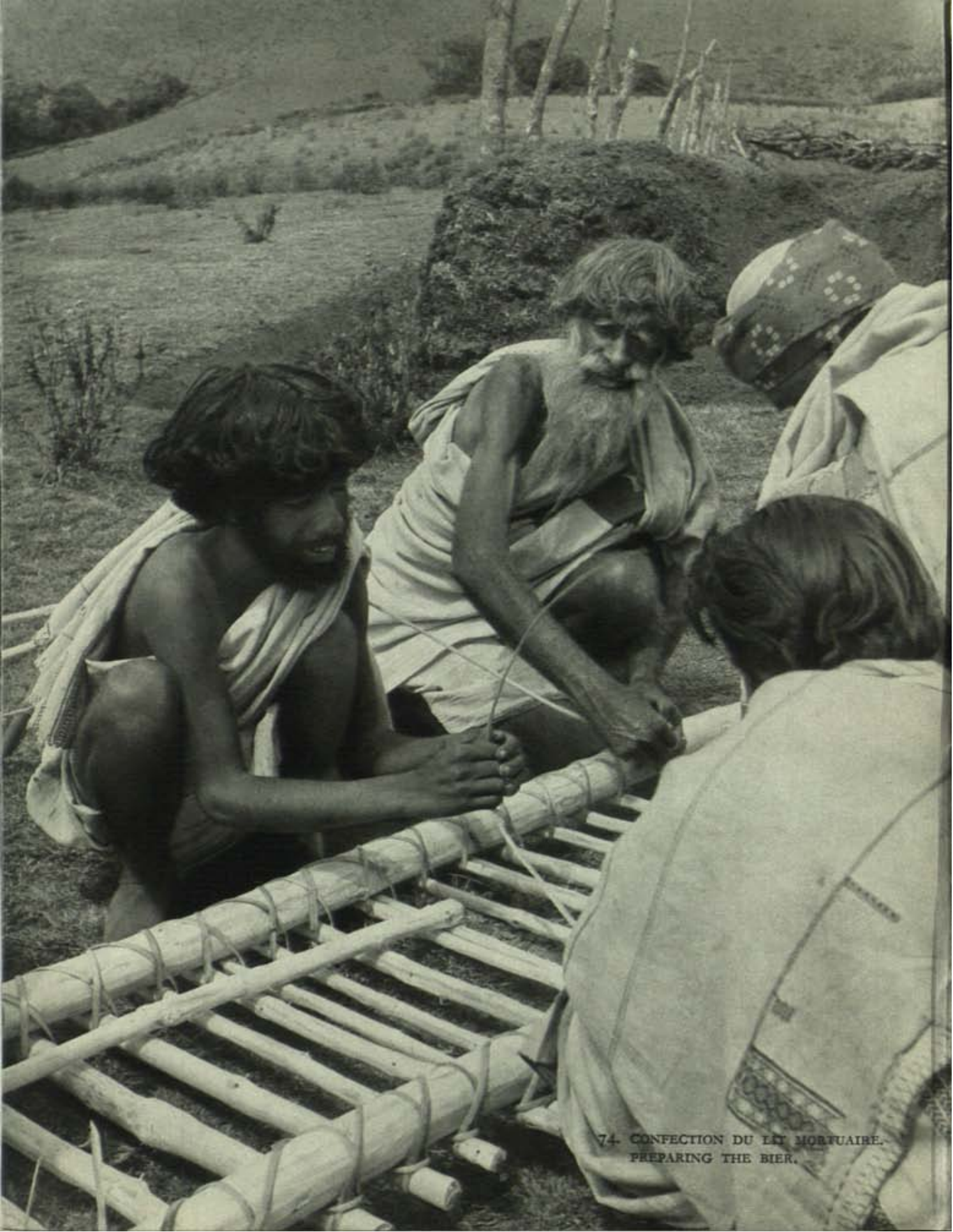


72. « LA MAÎTRESSE EST MORTE », DIT PANYA.  
"MY MISTRESS IS DEAD", ANNOUNCED PANYA.



73. « SAHIB, LES TODAS NE SONT PLUS QUE CINQ CENTS ».  
"SAHIB, THERE ARE ONLY FIVE HUNDRED TODAS LEFT".





74. CONFECTION DU LIT MORTUAIRE.  
PREPARING THE BIER.





75. LA POSE DU CORPS.  
LAYING OUT THE BODY.









76. « CE SOIR, DIT MOUTOVELLI, JE DOIS COUDRE LE LINCEUL DE MA SŒUR ».  
"TONIGHT", SAYS MOUTOVELLI, "I MUST SEW MY SISTER'S SHROUD."

77. DES HOMMES CHOISIS POUR LEUR FORCE ONT CAPTURÉ DANS LA MONTAGNE UN DES HUIT BUFFLES SACRÉS QUI SERONT OFFERTS EN SACRIFICE À LA MORTE.  
MEN CHOSEN FOR THEIR STRENGTH HAVE CAPTURED IN THE MOUNTAINS ONE OF THE EIGHT SACRED BUFFALOES WHICH WILL BE SACRIFICED TO THE DEAD WOMAN.



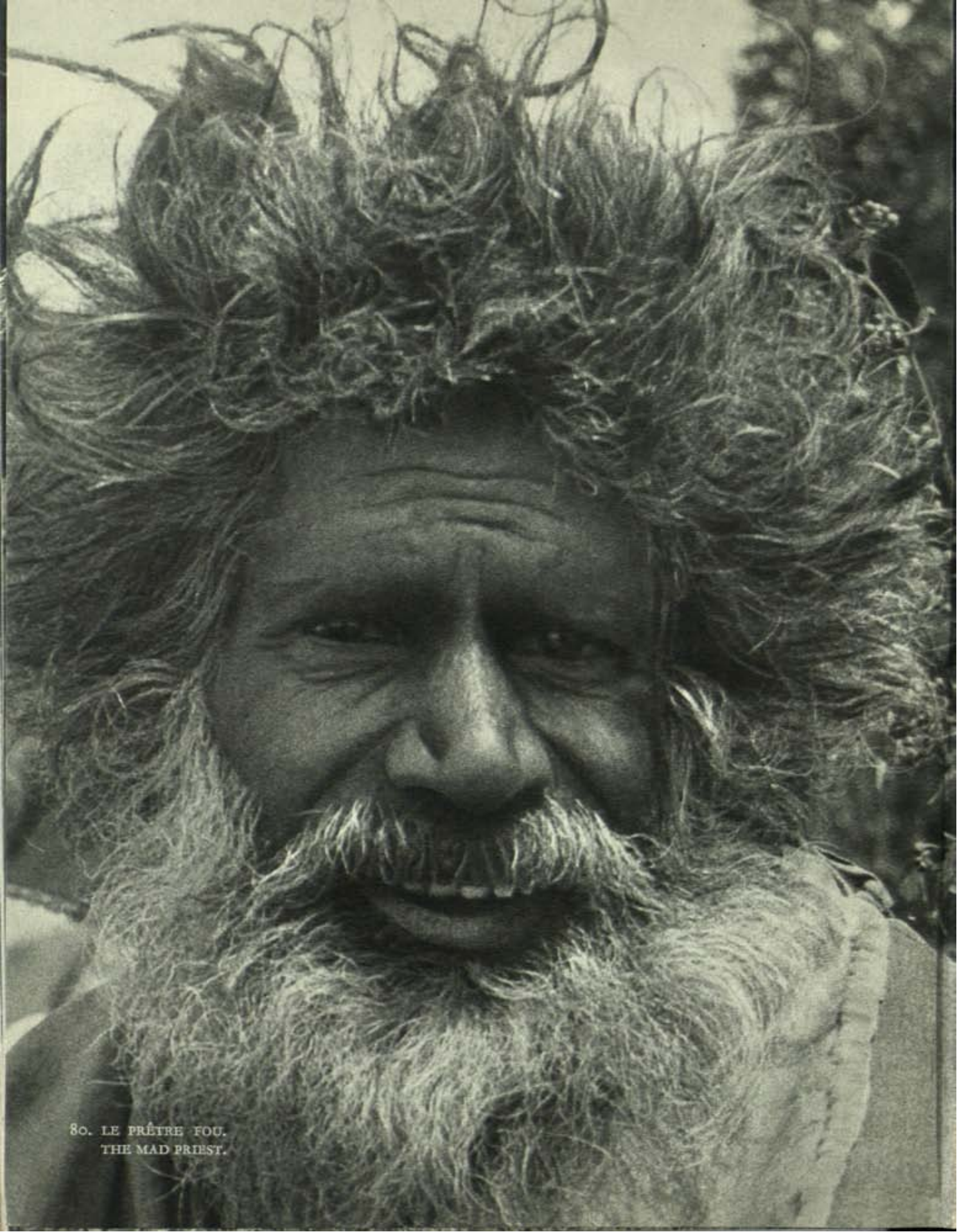


78. IMMOLATION.  
IMMOLATION.









80. LE PRÊTRE FOU.  
THE MAD PRIEST.

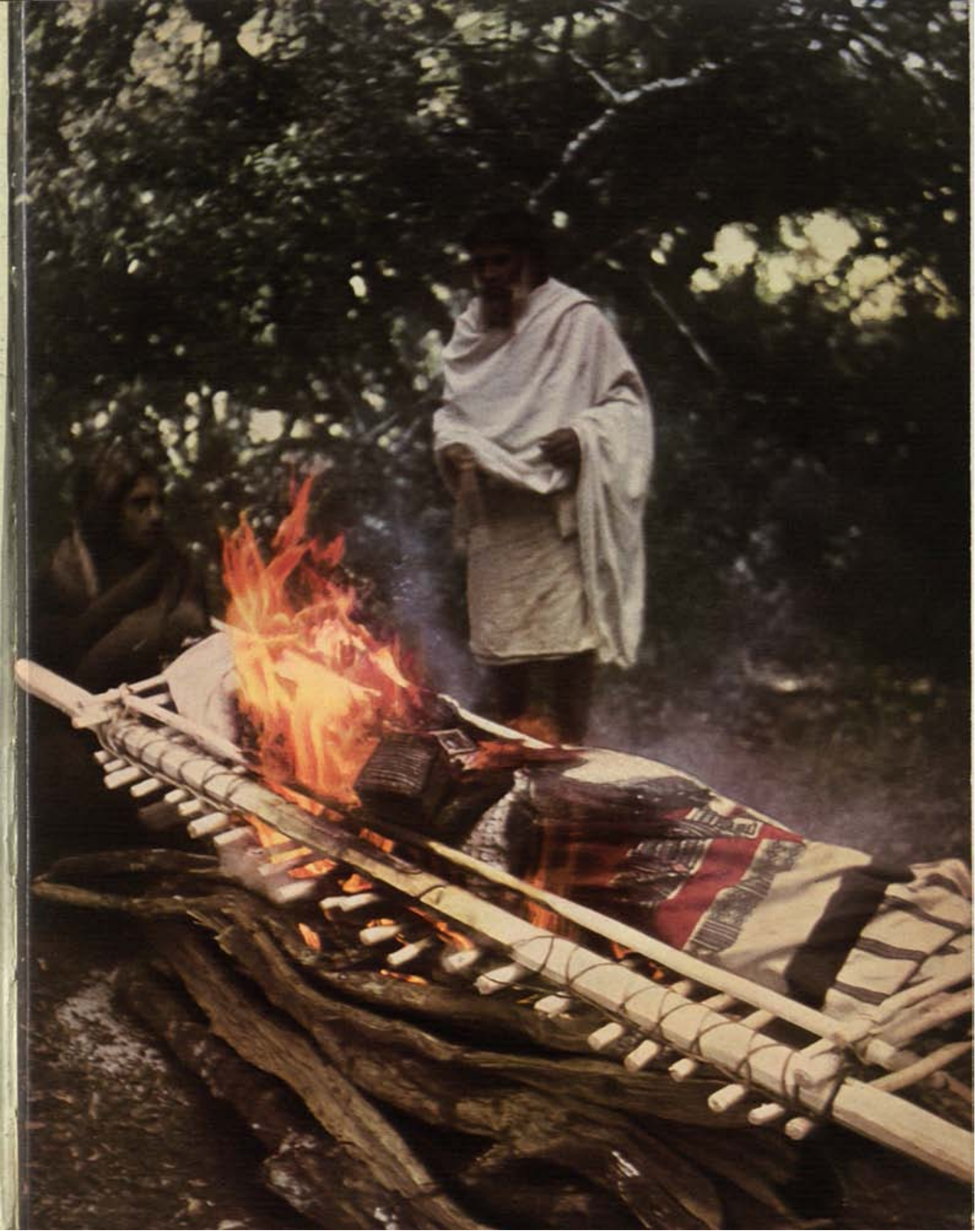




81. CONSÉCRATION DU BÛCHER.  
CONSECRATION OF THE FUNERAL PYRE.











## *Notes to the Plates*

### THE BONDOS

1. A very ancient taboo forbids the women of the tribe to let their hair grow or to wear any garment other than a loin-cloth; consequently, the women's love of adornment is concentrated on jewellery: silver rings and bracelets, and multi-coloured bead necklaces.

2. Our porters, apprehensive at the idea of entering the Bondos' territory, are led by François Hébert-Stevens through the rocks scattered in the bed of a torrent. The village we are approaching has no track linking it with the valley; and the density of the undergrowth, together with the complicated formation of the mountains, would make a trek through the jungle both exhausting and unreliable. There will be several days' march from here to the first huts.

3. Several days after our arrival, the women were still hesitating to come near us. Suspicious, irritable, quick to violence, the Bondos regard as an enemy any stranger who comes to disturb their solitude.

4. Their villages cluster on the heights, in the midst of clearings, from which their look-outs can survey the surrounding country. Their huts, grouped without any sort of plan, are covered with thick roofs of dry grass. A sort of veranda of simple fencing constitutes one side; it is here that they light their fires, eat their meals, and rest in the heat of the day.

5. While the women work in the doorways of the huts, the men go off hunting, or to the fields, or sleep, intoxicated by the fermented sap of the palm trees. They are hardly ever seen by day.

6. A crowd has collected round Vitold de Golish, to whom the chief's daughter has just given a head-band cut from a palm-leaf, the insignia of the tribe. Now we are really friends.

7, 8. Though they succumb quickly to illness, the young Bondos are full of good humour when the sun and fresh air have fortified them.

9. For women condemned to having their heads shaved, a man's head of hair is extremely attractive. The boys spend hours combing their hair. These have borrowed our scissors to do their hair like ours.



10. In each village the eligible girls have the use of a hut where they meet to receive their suitors. This is a characteristic, and somewhat strange, institution of the Bondos, which demonstrates a freedom of choice exceptional in India, where, as a general rule, marriages are arranged by parents.

11, 12. Boys and girls adorned for the rendezvous. The bracelets on the arms of the boys will be transferred to those of the favoured girl. Guruvári (right-hand photograph) is proud: she received the most.

13, 14, 15, 16. The *mudar* is a sacred plant which can be gathered only in the month of February. Then its stalks are peeled, dried, sorted, beaten, made supple with saliva, and transformed into yarn. This yarn, coloured red, black, or yellow with vegetable dyes, is then woven into cloth on a primitive loom. Each woman has one loin-cloth only, and does not think of making herself another until the first is worn out.

17. Rice constitutes the main food of the Bondos.

18. Exchanges are rare. From village to village, however, they might barter baskets of oranges for a bracelet or a little palm wine.

19, 20. The men divide their time between drinking and hunting. For small game they use arrows with wrought iron tips. They are excellent marksmen.

21, 22. Mundlipada, principal village of the Bondos.

23. Advára, who, so she said, was only forty.

24. They are animists, and worship trees and stones. But this sculptured stone, representing a monkey-god protector, is probably not of Bondo origin.

25, 26. The shaven heads of the girls accentuate their masculine appeal, in contrast to the effeminate appearance of the boys.

27. Fishing is principally the women's task. Wicker baskets, placed side by side in the torrents, are soon filled with fish, while the young girls, upstream, sing magic incantations, beating the water with bamboos.

### THE GADABAS

28. The horizontal stripes adorning the women's clothes are a reminder of the tiger-skins they believe they wore in former times.

29. The women are extremely coquettish. They spend long hours washing themselves and doing their hair. Their most characteristic trinkets are the rings of copper they wear in their ears, and the massive silver bracelets covering their forearms.

30. They are fond of music. Every feast-day or important event is announced to the sound of the tom-tom.

31. A wedding ceremony lasts for several days. From all the neighbouring villages guests arrive in small groups.

32, 33. The Gadaba village consists of a series of enclosures, in which are grouped three or four circular huts, made of earth and surmounted by large cone-shaped roofs of dried grass. Their walls are often painted in bright colours. On the branches of a nearby tree, tobacco leaves are hanging out to dry.

34. The sorcerer has placed at the foot of the sacred tree the household utensils of the bridal couple: a wooden ploughshare, a hoe, a fishing basket, a pestle for pounding grain, an oil lamp. Now he prepares to burn incense on the spot where the young couple will sit.

35. A young girl of thirteen is marrying a boy of eight. The young bride lives with her husband's uncle until her husband attains puberty. When she is too old, her husband will, in his turn, console himself with the young brides of his nephews.

36. To conclude the ceremony the guests, beginning with the bride's mother, bless the bride and bridegroom by placing grains of rice on their shoulders, heads, knees and feet, as a symbol of fertility.

37. Absorbed in the preparation of her philtres, this young sorceress has reached the point of caring nothing for coquetry.

38. Children are carried on the hip, as they are throughout India. The Gadabas often use a shoulder sash to help to support them. The differences of dress between the tribes are sometimes so great as to be in direct contrast. In Photo No. 7 a Bondo mother, with her head shaved, is carrying her small son, who has quite a thick head of hair; in this photograph a Gadaba mother, with an elaborate hair style, carries her son, who has his head shaved.

39. The young Gadabas, fed on boiled rice, and strangely reluctant to eat fruit, are nearly always undernourished. Also, amœbic dysentery—which is responsible for this child's inordinately swollen belly—ravages the tribe.

40, 41. On the occasion of every feast, bulls are sacrificed in homage to the gods. The flesh is then shared out among the guests. The feast concludes with a general drinking bout, during which everyone gets drunk on a fermented liquor made from rice.

42. Children work from a very early age. This one is pounding white rice.

43. The bamboo wicker-work which forms the walls of the huts is a protection against the sun, and provides excellent ventilation.

44, 45. This young girl, wearing on her fingers silver rupees mounted into rings, is engaged in threading through her ears the coils of copper wire which are the distinctive insignia of the women of her tribe.



46. The women, expert at enhancing their natural beauty, have brought adornment to a fine art.

### THE KANIS

47. Lake Kodayar.

48. The torrential rains which fall throughout six months of the year transform the Kani country into vast marshlands with luxuriant vegetation. We travel by canoe. Our guide has cut down some banana leaves to serve us as umbrellas.

49, 50. In contrast to the Kanis, who come down to the lake only to fish, we use it to travel to a neighbouring village. This is the first stage, after which we shall once more have to call upon a number of porters to carry our equipment up into the jungle covered mountains. Pierre Rambach supervises the unloading of the equipment.

51. When they have burnt away the brushwood and planted manioc in the virgin soil, the Kanis, in groups of four or five families, build their houses of bamboo and plaited palm branches. After a few years they abandon their village to go and build another on new territory.

52. It is not uncommon to meet small children in the midst of the forest, wandering about with only their amulets to protect them.

53, 54. To protect themselves from wild animals they build their huts on a rocky plateau, sometimes on piles. Some of them, for greater protection, prefer to live in tall trees, under a roof of leaves.

55. They play only one game; this consists of moving some red seeds into nine holes cut in a piece of wood, according to a complicated set of rules which Vitold de Golish is here trying to understand.

56. Owing to the extreme humidity of the climate, we cannot use our matches. The Kanis obtain fire by striking flint and steel together.

57. The Kani is rarely more than five feet tall. He uses a bow with pebbles instead of arrows. His skill with it is such that he can kill a running hare or a bird in full flight. His fishing equipment is better, for he can make wicker baskets to perfection.

58. The constant fear of wild animals, the undernourishment, and the severity of the climate give the Kanis a melancholy which seldom leaves them. Even the children are serious; they never laugh, and their rare smiles have something tragic about them.

59, 60. Although Lake Kodayar borders their domain, the art of canoe-building is unknown to the Kanis. For their rare trips on the lake they content themselves with rafts made from a bundle of bamboos.

61. This curious little building of reeds and bamboos, surmounted by a sort of torus of palm leaves, is like some grotesque carnival effigy. It is a temporary shrine set up by the shaman in front of a sick Kani's hut to ward off evil spirits.

62. For primitive peoples music has a kind of sacred reality. More powerful than philtres or rites, it represents the actual presence of the gods. It has a heady power which can send men into a trance, and inspire tigers with fear.

63. Malii has come with us to the stone marking the boundary of the Kani territory. She watches us as we set out for the valley where formerly her ancestors lived, and from which they were driven.

### THE TODAS

64. The Todas are tall, and of proud bearing. Men and women wear the same garment, the 'putkûli,' the drapery of which emphasises their haughty appearance.

65. They practise polyandry. A woman usually marries all the brothers in one family. She herself decides which one of her husbands is to be the official father of her children.

66. There are only three temples of this type in the Toda country. Only the priests may enter them.

67. The curious Toda houses, made of bamboo and wood, covered with dry grass and all exactly alike, are of a type unique in India. Their parabolic shape appears to be the same as that of the houses of two thousand years ago which served as models for the first Hindu temples hewn in the rocks.

68. The origins of the Todas are shrouded in mystery. Their appearance, their language, their religion and their customs bear little resemblance to those of the other tribes of India. They themselves claim that they originated in the Nilgiri hills where they now live.

69. The men assemble in a circle at the top of the mountain to discuss the affairs of the tribe.

70. A group of musicians from the vassal tribe of the Kothas has come specially to play for the funeral. The Todas have no musical instruments of their own.

71. They know only one dance. Grouped in a circle, the men move slowly round from left to right, with a shuffling step, uttering guttural cries of "rhao, hao, hao, rhao, hao, hao, hao . . ."

72. The vassal tribe of the Panyas lives in the Nilgiri jungle; it provides the Todas with bananas and some grain. The women of this tribe are notable for their custom of stretching the lobes of their ears with rings of bamboo.



73. An old Toda comes to our camp to tell us of the death of a young woman. Disease is decimating the tribe, and dooming it to rapid extinction.

74, 75. The men construct a sort of litter which will serve to transport the young woman's body from her house to the place chosen for the funeral ceremony.

76. The rich decoration on their garment, the 'putkûli,' is the only example of Toda art.

77. The life of the Todas is inseparable from that of the buffaloes. The pure souls of these sacred animals will take the souls of the dead to paradise.

78. The buffaloes are killed by a blow on the head with an axe.

79. At one time the Todas used to sacrifice up to a hundred buffaloes in honour of their dead. But the tribe has dwindled, and there are not so many hunters now. The number of sacrificial victims has dropped now to about ten.

80. Pungud, who looks sixty, is barely thirty. A sort of tragic exaltation is reflected on her prematurely aged countenance. It reminds us of King Lear, of the madness of misfortune.

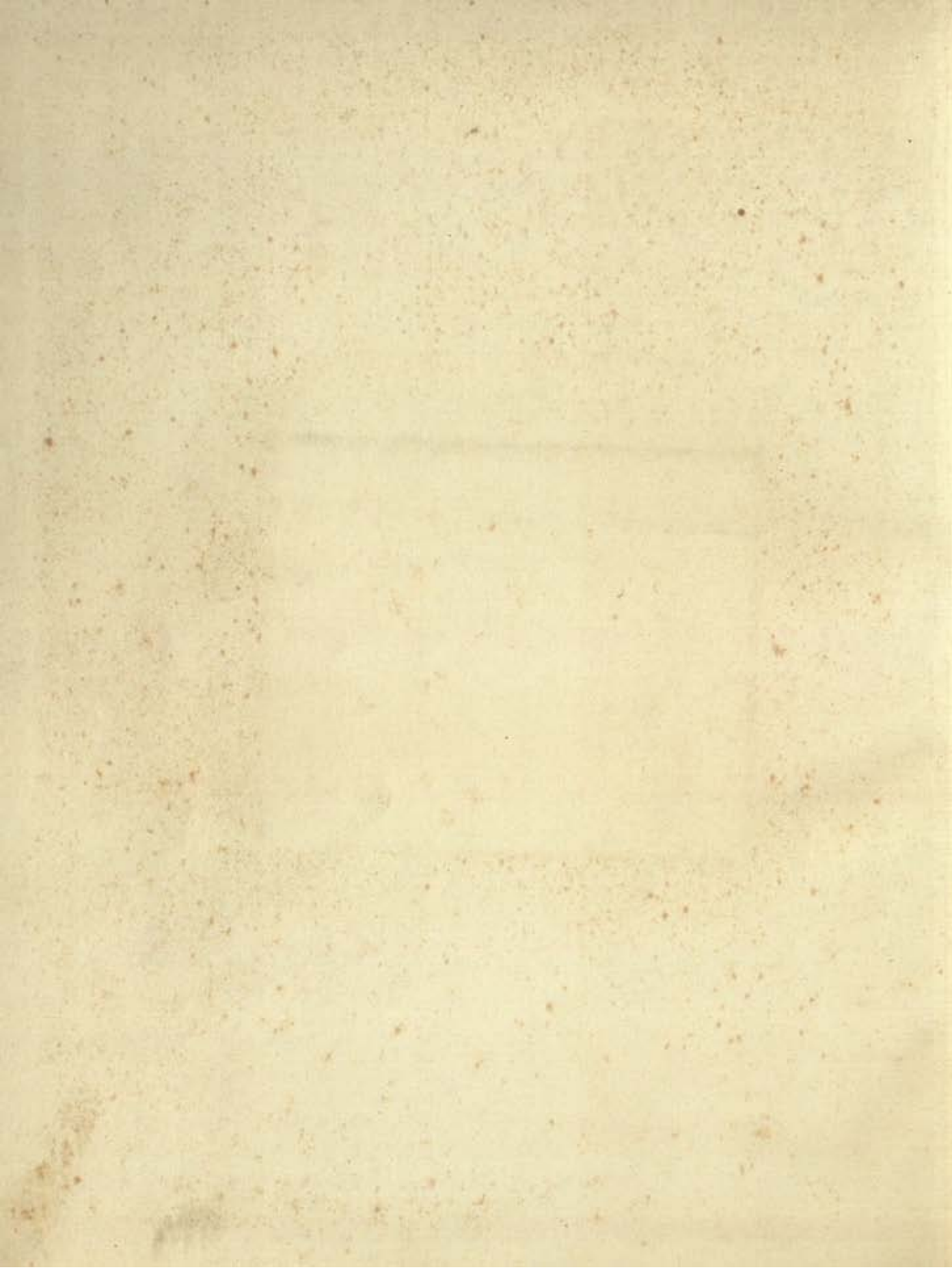
81. The priests set light to the funeral pyre with twigs smeared with butter.

82. The body, the clothes, several personal effects and a little food are burned. The funeral ceremony is over.









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